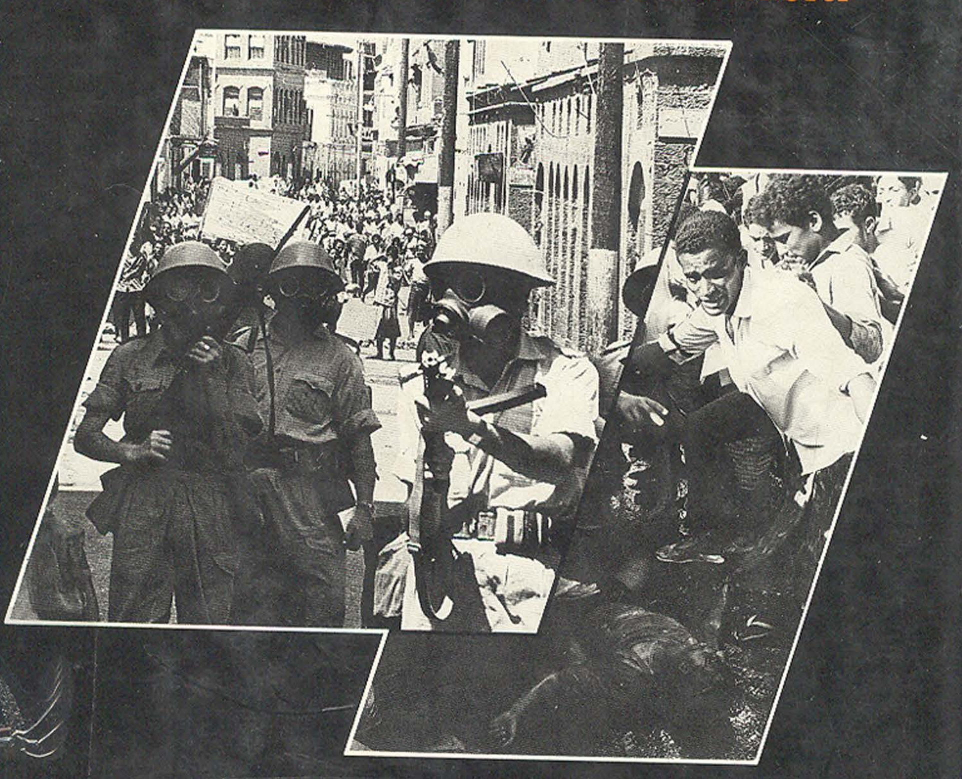
SHIFTING SANDS

The British in South Arabia



David Ledger

Aden and the Protectorates were the backwater of Empire, avoided by colonial servants seeking lofty careers. A molten mass of rock and sand with an aroma all of its own and a raffish reputation as the last refuge for divorcees and alcoholics. True, Aden had its fair share of both, yet over the years the hardy overcame the shocks of the climate, the sheer ugliness of Aden and the remarkable sights and smells of its backstreets to stay, perhaps beguiled by the very strangeness of it all, to work and dedicate their lives to its service. So it is no accident that more books have been written by the British about South Arabia than any other similar territories. This book is different.

After tracing the historical background it is the first to describe in graphic detail the final days of British rule when South Arabia was the last frontier of Empire and a focus of world attention. Only in Palestine did the British withdraw in such haste and leave behind such chaos. The book may be controversial as it does not hesitate to indicate those, both British and Arab, who behaved badly or with negligence. The story is not all tragedy and high politics—these are leavened with a measure of humour. It was written for the British, especially those who remember South Arabia with nostalgia and a certain bewilderment as to how it all came to an end so quickly and so badly. This book may provide some of the answers.

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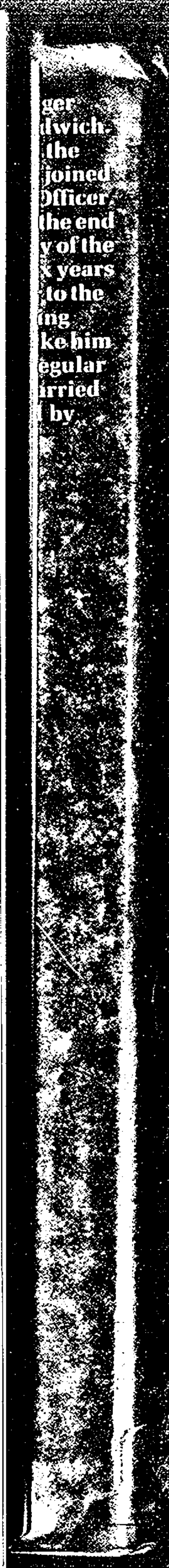
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David Ledger



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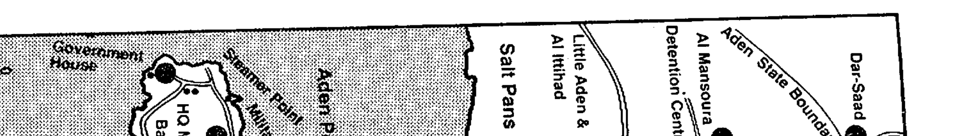
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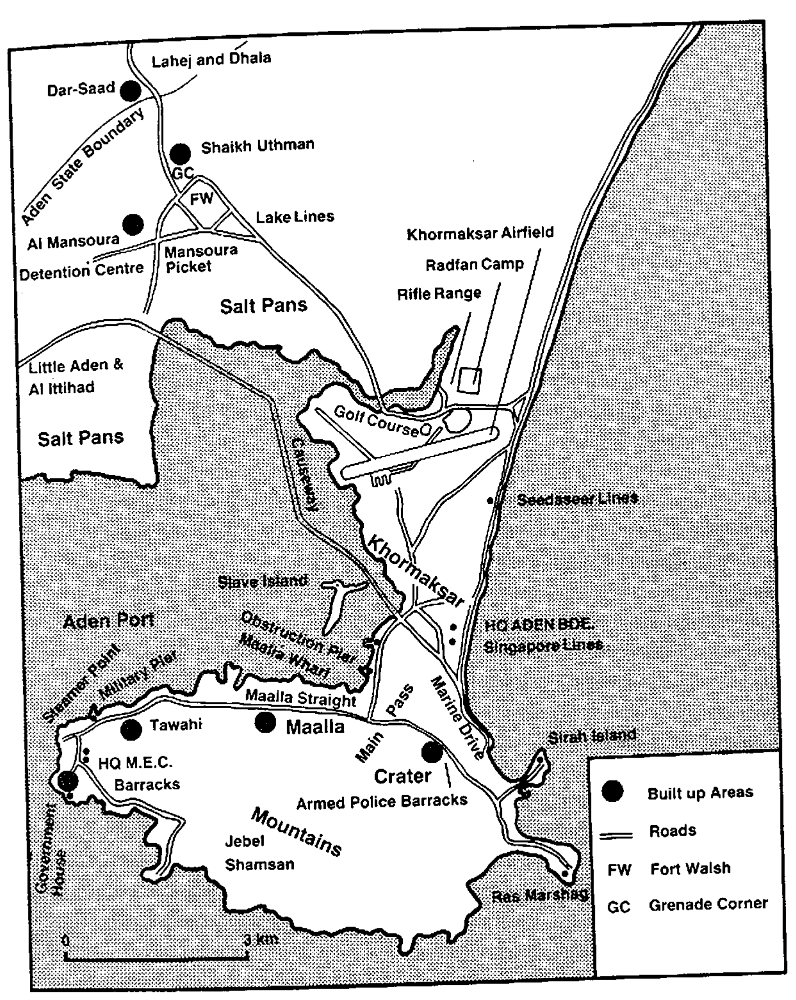
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Preface
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I Happy
II Aden
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Appendix
Index

Contents

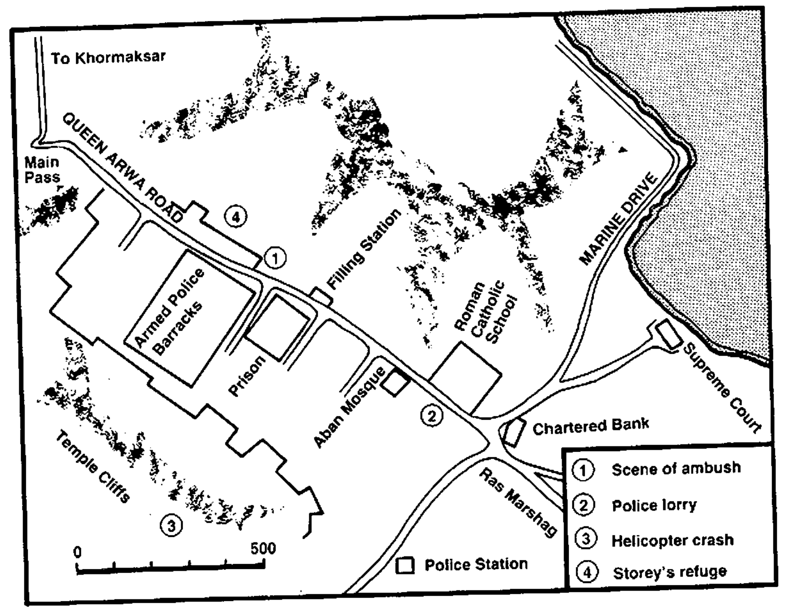
Maps	iv–vi
Preface	vii
Note on Endpapers	viii
Prologue	9
I Happy Arabia	12
II Aden	31
III The Revolutionaries	41
IV Funeral in Aden	62
V Federal Government at Bay	81
VI This Month's Magicians	95
VII Change at the Top	118
VIII The Mutiny	130
IX The Fall of the Sultans	151
X War with Two Fronts	174
XI . . . So Depart	197
Epilogue	214
Postscript	227
Appendix—Political Organisations	228-229
Index	230-231

The Federation of South Arabia (1966)

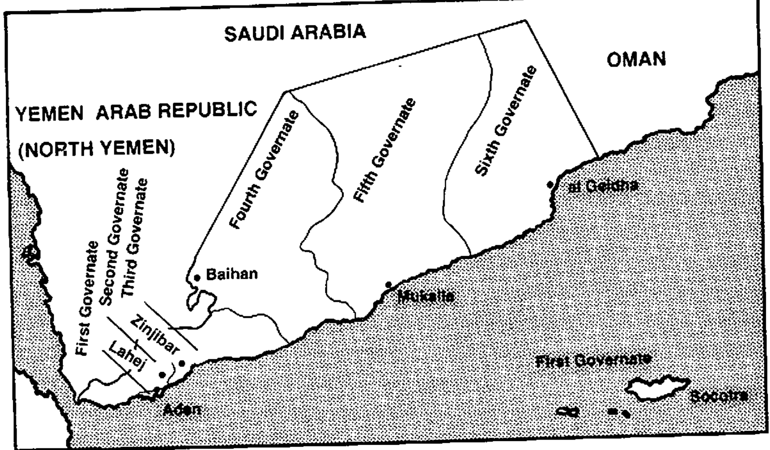




Aden and Shaikh Uthman



Crater



The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

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Preface

Most of the notes for this book were written at the time or shortly after the events which they describe. I count myself fortunate to have been in South Arabia during the traumatic period from 1963 to the end of 1967. For many of my contemporaries, these years were an unforgettable experience, and for some it was the time of their lives.

Those who remained in Her Majesty's Service have done well, many have commanded their regiments or risen to high positions in the Civil Service. Others have made their own way, and for the most part with success. Friendships made in South Arabia proved enduring, yet when old times are remembered a shadow falls across the talk. Something about South Arabia was not quite right and somehow, there is the suggestion that the British broke faith and behaved in a way which was dishonourable. This view is held in varying degrees of vehemence by many. Whether there is truth in this or not is for the reader to judge. This book does not pretend to be a history or an authority but is an account of events as I saw them. If in writing it I have managed to convey some of the charm, the excitement and the sheer dottiness of South Arabia, and perhaps thrown a light on events which at the time seemed inexplicable, then the labour has been worthwhile.

My thanks go to George Coles for persuading me to disinter the manuscript, to Professor Bob Serjeant for his encouragement, to John Carter, to Len Harrow for his patience, to Edwin Taylor and Maurice Gent for their research. My thanks also to Faruk Luqman, Abdul Rahman Haideri, and friends from all parties in South Arabia who have displayed much kindness and tolerance with my enquiries into their affairs; and lastly to my family, who will now be able to regain the use of the dining table.

David Ledger
Dartmoor, January 1983

A Note on the Endpapers

An Anecdote by the Artist
I painted this picture 'on spec' in the early 1960s. As it was the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars who took me along the Dhala Road on this once in a lifetime trip, I obviously put them in the resultant painting—being strongly advised that 'they had plenty of money and could easily afford the £90'! They said they couldn't—and that price included the frame!

The painting did me an immense ammount of good, however, being hawked around from one regiment to another, getting me a great many commissions, and it didn't worry me that I hadn't sold it.

Eventually it was bought by the British Officers serving with the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL) for their mess in Seedaseer Lines, but before it was delivered I was asked to alter some of the detail to link it more closely with the APL.

The alteration can be seen by comparing the painting with the later print. The print, which is donated by Lt Colonel G H Coles (ex-APL), was found by him in a Shell house magazine in a dentist's waiting room in Aden. The alterations include: painting out the aircraft, altering the tac-signs and uniform of the scout car and crew.

David Shepherd

An End to the Tale by Major General J D Lunt CBE
When we completed the new officers' mess for the FRA in Khormaksar in 1962, I suggested we should purchase 'The Dhala Convoy' and give it to that mess.

The snag was that the original painting was of the Royals (not the QRIH who did not go out to Aden until my time there.) I believe the Royals were offered it for purchase but for a sum much in excess of £70. They turned down the offer and we bought it for, I believe, £700. David Shepherd turned the British officers into Arab ones, changed the vehicle markings and, rather to my sorrow, removed the Twin-Pioneer which featured in the original. He did this, I understand, under the misapprehension that we did not receive support from the RAF in the FRA.

The painting was a gift from the British officers serving with the FRA. We hoped in due course that the Arabs would take over peacefully and that the picture would serve as a memento of old comradeship. As you know, things turned out rather differently three years later.

By then Brig (now Maj Gen) Jack Dye was commanding the FRA. It fell to his unhappy lot to amalgamate the FRA with the National Guard to form the South Arabian Army, and shortly afterwards to deal with the mutiny of his troops. Shortly before leaving Aden, Dye, and another British officer, succeeded in removing the picture from the mess. It was taken out of its frame and brought home. Then, reframed, it hung in the GOC's house in Colchester (where Gen Dye was commanding) until Brig C G T Viner drew my attention to the picture; he had been one of my battalion commanders at the time we bought it. I was Vice Adjutant General at the time and I got in touch with Jack Dye, by then Director of the Territorial Army. He agreed with me that since the APL/FRA was 90% infantry, and since most of the British who had served with the force had been from the infantry, the picture's proper home was the School of Infantry.

Acknowledgements
The author gratefully acknowledges the permission to reproduce here as endpapers the two versions of 'The Dhala Road' by the artist David Shepherd, and the artist's publishers, Solomon & Whitehead (Guild Prints) Ltd, with thanks also to Colonel Charles Lane of the School of Infantry, Warminster, where both versions now hang, and to Major General J D Lunt CBE for his account.

Prologue

It is far better to be Britain's enemy than Britain's friend. If you are the former there is a possibility of being bought, but if you are the latter there is a certainty of being sold.

Attributed to the Sherif Hussain of Baihan—1966

It is said that the reason for the British Government's decision is economy. You must understand that you are economising at the expense of the lives and prosperity of other people.

Sultan Salih of the Audhali to Lord Beswick—17 February 1966

The days of the Queen's Arabia were numbered and the grace and favour of Her Majesty's Protection were to be withdrawn from Her South Arabian subjects. The great military base of Aden dismantled, the port abandoned, the land and people left to their own devices.

By early 1966 South Arabia had become an embarrassment to the British. International hostility, revolution, the loss of British lives and most significantly the rising financial costs had convinced the Labour government of Harold Wilson that the time had come to pull out.

Once the decision had been made and a timetable of withdrawal settled, there only remained the task of breaking the news to Britain's South Arabian allies then engaged in a desperate battle for survival.

The time—11 am on 16 February 1966. The place—the Chamber of the Supreme Council of the Federation of South Arabia, in their capital city of al Ittihad across the bay from Aden. The chosen instrument—Lord Beswick. His audience, twenty or so Arabian chiefs sitting with their Adeni colleagues, flanked by British advisors. Lord Beswick in his dark suit, dark moustache, was a heavy, deliberate figure. The Arabs wore brightly hued kilts like so many Scottish clansmen, their clan identified by the fashion of the headgear, a high golden turban for Lahej, a white band for the Audhali, the Adenis in suits and ties. The British wore a uniform of sunburnt faces, white shirts and ties for the occasion.

A sense of duty had brought Lord Beswick to this moment. This was his first excursion into Arabian politics and it was clear that he did not like it. If the Arabs were mercurial and elusive, then their British advisors were equally baffling. A lifetime devoted to Labour politics, the Co-operative movement and the Church was no preparation for dealing with a society

which did not comprehend political forms as he knew them. Part of the news that he brought, his audience had already guessed.

By means of the military base the British in Aden sought to command the southern approaches to the Red Sea and so to spread a mantle of protection and influence in a great arc from the Horn of Africa across the Indian Ocean and up the Arabian Gulf, the oil fields and the tanker routes. But these were the heydays of Arab nationalism. The charismatic President Nasser of Egypt, then at the height of his power, orchestrated international opinion to oppose the British presence, while a 60,000 strong Egyptian Army in neighbouring Yemen co-ordinated a campaign of subversion, sabotage and assassination against the British and their South Arabian allies. The President hinted that this would cease once the base was removed.

Already the British troops were devoting much of their energies to defending themselves in the streets of Aden. The United Nations consistently called for the removal of the base, its presence complicated relations between Britain and the Arab world, at home its usefulness severely questioned, abroad Britain's allies were at best lukewarm in their support. Costs were rising dramatically and at this time were over £60 million a year. This last factor above all settled the fate of the Aden base and South Arabia with it.

The audience sighed as this was made plain by Lord Beswick. They gasped with shock and surprise when he went on to tell them that after the Federation achieved planned independence in 1968, there would be no defence treaty with the new state and that they would be left to face their enemies alone.

The Arabs knew that if this policy was carried out they were ruined and stood to forfeit property and even lives. For years they had supported Britain against the assault of the forces of Arab revolution, they had ridden the whirlwind confident of British support, and they had every reason to expect it. Personal assurances, both public and private, had been made by British ministers and representatives of the Crown, and the position had been underlined by the 1959 Treaty of Friendship and Protection. This had been amplified in 1964 when the British government in setting a date for independence had indicated that it would conclude a treaty of defence with the Federation.

The South Arabian reply was bitter. 'Is the British Government saying that their solemn and repeated promises are now to be merely brushed aside because it is no longer convenient for the British Government as a government which attached sanctity to treaties and international obligations. We consider what you have told us is dishonourable of the British Government.'

The South Arabians went on to ask for aid and protection. In the event they got a little of both but not enough to make any difference. In the Yemen, the Egyptians abandoned peace talks, reinforced their army and increased their support for terrorism in South Arabia; elsewhere the world response was apathetic.

Lord Beswick went home and prospered. All the South Arabians who listened to his address are now dead or in exile.

What follows is the story of the British in South Arabia, especially of the last days as the land sank into anarchy, and how Soviet warships came to lie in Aden's harbour and how with the nationalisation of bicycles a South Arabian leader could claim that his people are the first in the world to achieve communism.

To understand what happened we have to go back a long way.

Chapter I

Happy Arabia

Anybody who claims to understand South Arabian politics has been sadly misinformed.

Brigadier Lunt—The Barren Rocks

The basic trouble is that the peoples of South Arabia have never been united in a single state and have rarely owed allegiance to the same overlord. The golden age of the land, if there ever was one, has long since passed. The empires which grew on the riches of the spice trade have crumbled away. The famous sacred road, hallowed by history and ancient tradition, along which trod Roman and Greek, Egyptian and Phoenician bearing frankincense and myrrh bound for the Mediterranean, had disappeared. Only a few Himyaritic remains and shadowy legends passed down from father to son over the centuries record the splendours of a forgotten civilisation. As each kingdom fell its survivors sought refuge in the mountains, adding to the diversity of South Arabian peoples, dwelling in sheltered valleys almost untouched by the passing of time. For most of recorded history the land has been in a state of anarchy.

Aden has been famous as a port since the dawn of history, its fortunes fluctuating with those of the people living in the vast hinterland. Sometimes a foreign conqueror would seize it as a base for his ships and Aden would prosper. When he left, it would decline.

In 1728 the chief of the Abdali tribe styling himself Sultan of Lahej renounced his alliance to the Imam of the Yemen. Seven years later in alliance with the tribes of Yafa' he stormed Aden and expelled the Imam's representative.

The British visited Aden frequently and in 1802 concluded a treaty of friendship with the Sultan.

Consequent relations proved difficult and the British administrators in India began to perceive the strategic advantages of Aden, its possibilities as a base for trade and as a coaling centre for the steamships which were beginning to make their appearance.

The excuse for conquest arose when Sultan Muhsin of Lahej incautiously allowed his men to pillage an Indian ship flying the British flag which had been wrecked on the coast. This may have been an early insurance fraud, but it was enough for the British. In January 1839 Captain

Stamford Beresford Haines of the Indian Navy commanding Her Majesty's steamer *Voltage*, twenty eight guns, and *Cruizer*, ten guns, with 300 British and 400 Indian troops stormed and captured the port. Aden thus fell into the hands of the British, the first new accession of territory in the reign of Queen Victoria.

Captain Haines stayed on as the first Governor of Aden. He soon found that if he was to be left in peace then he had to come to some accommodation with the peoples who lived outside his perimeter. The Sultan of Lahej had never quite got over his loss and made two attempts to recapture the town, each of which was easily defeated, but the problem remained. At length Captain Haines embarked on a policy to persuade the tribes to sign 'treaties of friendship' which meant they were drawn within the British sphere of influence and were expected to behave themselves towards the British. In return they received a small annual present. Haines soon realised that there was no need to conquer the hinterland to make Aden safe. Although the land was traditionally part of the Yemen, the Imam of Sana had lost control a hundred years before. The tribes lying between Aden and the Yemen proper were Sunnis of the Shafa'i Sect who looked upon the Imam, who was head of the Shi'a Zaidi Sect, with the deep suspicion of sixteenth-century Calvinists for the Pope and they had little desire to see him back.

Haines remained Governor in Aden for 15 years, only once leaving his post through illness and then he had to be forcibly carried to the ship taking him for recuperation. Shortly after his appointment the Government of India changed and the expansionists who had encouraged the capture of Aden were replaced by those who entertained doubts over the enterprise. From then on Haines had a difficult time, not made any easier by his own prickly nature. No slight was too small to pass notice and the records are full of his quarrels with military commanders. Yet his personal relations with the natives, Arab, Indian and Jew, were excellent. His efforts to promote trade were only a partial success, and he financed it by employing Treasury funds to back special ventures. The accounts were a shambles and the son of the former Governor of Aden let him down. A commission of enquiry called Haines to account and although he was cleared of embezzlement the authorities held him personally responsible, as 'a gentleman'. Thrown into a debtor's prison he was released a few days before his death in 1860.*

* Haines was brought to trial on three counts of fraud and embezzlement. The prosecutor's case was strong, nevertheless the jury acquitted Haines on two counts and the government dropped the third clause. However, the establishment had no intention of letting Haines escape. Much had been made, during and before the trial, of his willingness to pay the £28,000 deficit, and he was called upon to honour his pledge. Haines probably intended to pay by instalments from his salary. When faced with a demand for immediate repayment he was unable to settle. This convinced Lord Elphinstone that he was a 'rascal' and by order of the government he was cashiered and thrown into jail. Haines was bankrupt although according to the *Bombay Telegraph and Courier* (31 July 1854) he had accumulated savings of over £10,000. (For a full account of Haines' career see *Sultans of Aden* by Gordon Waterfield, John Murray, 1968, and *Aden under British Rule* by R J Gavin, C Hurst & Co., 1975.)

In 1871 the Turks launched another invasion of North Yemen and on their own behalf subsequently asserted the Imam's claims to Aden's hinterland. By so doing they exposed the vulnerability of 'the friendly relationships' between the tribes and the British in Aden. A more formal connection was required to counter the Turks. Yet the British in India, haunted by the ghosts of an army lost in Afghanistan, hesitated at involving themselves too deeply with peoples alarmingly like those who had given so much trouble on the North West Frontier. A compromise was reached and gradually the tribes were persuaded to sign a form of protection treaty. These treaties were negotiated with tribal leaders and as a result of this haphazard process a series of British Protectorates evolved.

In return for Queen Victoria's 'gracious favour and protection' the tribal leaders undertook to 'refrain from any correspondence or agreement with any foreign nation and not to cede, sell, mortgage, lease, hire or otherwise dispose of any territory other than to the British Government'. From the Arab point of view the treaties not only assured a regular income but there was always a chance that powerful protection would be available against raids from their fierce Zaidi neighbours. Moreover, as the British displayed little interest in their internal affairs the tribes did not feel they were surrendering their independence.

In the seventy-five years between 1839 and the outbreak of the First World War, British influence grew and the jumble of protected states extended until they stretched along the southern shore of the Arabian Peninsula as far as the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman in the east and away into the great sands of the Empty Quarter and mountains of the Yemen in the north.

The treaty policy, although admirable at the time, contained seeds of later disaster. The lack of fertile land had been the cause of endless disputes and bloody feuds. Over the centuries the custom had grown up whereby a much smaller tribe of outsiders had been used as mediators between, two, three or more larger ones, so keeping the balance.

At Dhala in the west, it was the descendants of a rebellious Turkish Satrap who apportioned the fertile wadi beds. In the east, the Ashraf of Baihan, descendants of the Prophet, traditional peacemakers of Islam, protected the waterholes without which the wandering nomads of the desert would perish. Peace-keeping was a dangerous business: not infrequently the peacemakers would come to a violent end or be held to ransom by their tribesmen.

There were exceptions. Since the days when men worshipped the sun, the Affifis, priest kings of mountainous Yafa', are said to have held part temporal and part spiritual sway over their turbulent subjects, while the Aulaqis claimed to trace their lineage to the rulers of the ancient kingdom of Maan.

Generally speaking the people with whom the British negotiated, although holding influence at the time, did not control the people whom they claimed to represent.

By recognising and protecting the mediators, and most important, by paying them the annual gifts of money and arms to distribute to the tribes, the British made them rulers and their spheres of influence into states, so freezing an ever-shifting situation. While these had money to give, weapons to distribute and British protection to rely on, the tribes paid lip service and seethed with envy and frustration at the trick which fate had played them. No state was without its dissidents; there was many a nasty murder to decide who was to be the leader of the ruling house.

Over the years both the British and the rulers persuaded themselves that they really did rule the people they claimed to. It was a mistake for which both were to pay dearly.

After more than thirty years of intrigue and protests the Turks accepted the position and by ratifying the Anglo-Turkish Convention in 1914 recognised a frontier between the Yemen proper and British South Arabia. Efforts to delineate the border with exactitude failed. A joint commission set up for the purpose gave up its task, confounded by tribal disputes. Only some sixty miles were surveyed, the remainder demarcated by a line arbitrarily drawn on the map at forty-five degrees from a point just north of Dhala.

The British had gained a cruel land, rich in wild untamed scenery but little else. The heart is a highland massif which gives way to sands in the north and the Gulf of Aden in the south. Except for fringes of desert it is a country of rock and gorge, mountain and plateau. In all South Arabia not a single stream rising in the highlands flows all year or successfully traverses the coastal plain to the sea.

It was during the First World War that the South Arabian people had their first taste of British protection. In response to an appeal by the Sultan of Lahej to help repel the invading Turks, a British force set out from Aden. The whole episode was a military disgrace. British and Indian troops began to march across 40 miles of desert at midday. Many collapsed and over thirty died of heatstroke. Aden's seven motor vehicles were commandeered and used to rush ice to the exhausted troops. On the arrival of the survivors in Lahej the Sultan rode out to greet them. Regrettably they mistook him for a Turk and shot him dead. Then without engaging the enemy they fell back on Aden. A replacement general succeeded in recapturing Shaikh Uthman after which operations were limited to patrol actions as the Turks cut off from their homeland resolutely held a line of fortifications based on Lahej. Eventually after the armistice was signed with the Ottoman Empire the Turkish Commander Ali Said Pasha came into Aden with 3,000 men to surrender and a hero's welcome.

With the collapse of Turkey at the end of the First World War her troops evacuated the country leaving behind the Imam as ruler in Sana. The Imam Yahya was a remarkable man who utterly personified the isolation and backwardness of his country. Born and bred in the highlands he had never left the Yemen or had even seen the sea. His election as Imam in 1904 had

been the signal for a general uprising against the Turks and for the next eight years the Yemen was continuously at war.

Sometimes the Imam fought the Turks, at others he was struggling against his own people to consolidate his position. By 1912 the country was exhausted and all sides had had enough. The Turks, fought to a standstill, recognised the Imam as a semi-independent ruler, their commander remarking that 'all Europe could be conquered by such men as I had to subdue.'* For his part the Imam undertook to observe a ten year truce and have relations with no other power. The agreement was scrupulously observed by both sides and throughout the First World War the Imam remained loyal to his former foes.

Once the Turks had left the Imam was quick to reassert his claims to Aden and take over from the Turks much of the territory in South Yemen which they had occupied during the war. British protests were of no avail. A diplomatic mission to Sana ended in complete failure and it was not for eight years that 'King George's gracious favour and protection' was shown to be worth more than the paper it was written on. For his part the Imam, who believed he had a divine mission to bring all the Yemen under his control, pursued a consistent policy of strengthening Imami authority in those British Protectorates which he had seized. From his experience of the British he had no reason to suppose that he would not be successful. But things had changed since the war and the Imam, secluded in his mountains, knew little about the development of the aeroplane. The British had discovered that a single squadron of bombers could effectively become an instrument of peace. Experience in Iraq, India and Somaliland and elsewhere had shown them that air power could be used to 'pacify' insurgents with the minimum of fuss and expense. In 1927 they were ready to apply the results of the lessons learnt to the Imam. In September that year a party of Zaidi tribesmen rampaged through Subaiha in northern Lahej, burning and looting as they went. A second column moving south from Dhala was cut to pieces by the tribes of Radfan supported at the crucial moment by the RAF. The Radfan tribesmen gleefully dumped sacks of Zaidi heads at the foot of an RAF officer who travelled up from Aden to assess the results of the battle. The other Yemeni raiders immediately withdrew on a forty-eight hour ultimatum that they would be bombed. Berating his troops the Imam sent them back into the field so that in February 1928 a further party of Zaidi troops raided across the border and kidnapped two Protectorate Chiefs. British patience had worn out and the reply was as swift as it was effective. Taiz and other Yemeni towns were bombed and so shaken was the Imam that almost all occupied territory was immediately abandoned.

* Ahmad Izzat Pasha (Ingrams, *The Yemen*, p. 61)

The Imam quickly revised his ideas about British strength and turned his energies to expanding the divinely ordained frontiers of the Yemen in other directions. He was again unfortunate. In the north he came face to face with Ibn Saud, a man of similar ambitions to himself. In the swift war which followed the Saudis invaded the Yemeni coastal strip known as the Tihama and so completely defeated the Imam upon his northern frontiers that within two months he was suing for peace. In the meantime with the Saudi war brewing the Imam had found it expedient to come to terms with the British. In January 1935 he withdrew his forces from the parts of the Dhala and Audhali states which he still occupied. He did not withdraw from the Rassas Sultanate although, according to the Anglo-Turkish Convention this territory was within the British sphere of influence. The British had no 'legal' treaty with the Sultan of Rassas, one had been negotiated but not signed as the officials in Bombay thought his demand for two hundred and fifty gold sovereigns as a yearly stipend excessive. The matter had been overtaken by events, and as a result the land fell permanently to the Imam. The wretched Sultan paid for his mistake by spending most of his life in an Imami dungeon.

The fate of the Sultan proved no stumbling block when the Imam welcomed a proposal that Colonel (later Sir Bernard) Reilly should visit Sana and discuss a treaty. The eventual result was the controversial 'status quo' Treaty of Sana which in effect provided for a forty-year truce. Much of the later trouble revolved around Article 3 and particularly the word 'frontier' appearing in the English text. In brief, to the English this meant a line of the map over which neither side would seek to cross into the other's territory. To the Yemenis it meant that the British would stay in Aden and would not try and increase their influence outside the Colony. The Treaty, with all its seeds of future trouble, was signed on 11 February 1934. The British recognised the Imam as ruler of the Yemen. To them this meant the ex-Turkish part, to the Imam it meant the lot.*

Even if the British had understood the Arab interpretation of the Treaty it is doubtful whether they would have been unduly disturbed. In 1934 British policy was still of minimum involvement in the Protectorates although force of circumstances had already begun to erode this rather complacent attitude.

Medieval and despotic as the Imam certainly was, at least he had contrived to bring some form of rough and ready law and order to his turbulent land. After nearly one hundred years of British influence the Protectorates were just as backward and chaotic as before. The arrival of significant numbers of modern rifles which followed in the wake of the First World War had greatly exacerbated the already endemic blood feuds.

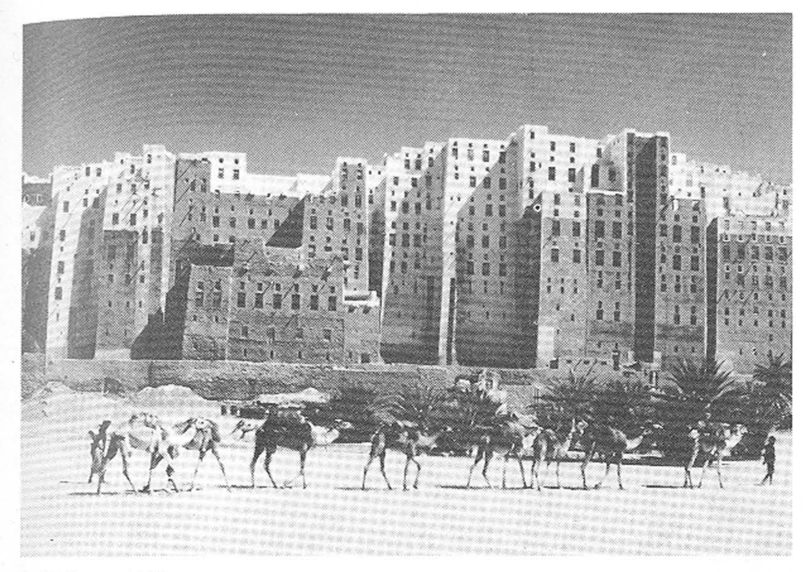
* British official opinion on the interpretation of this Treaty and the policy it represented was not as unanimous as was later asserted. Colonel Jacobs in a memorandum in 1930 was able to cite the view of Sir Mark Sykes put forward in 1915 'that the whole of the Protectorate be ceded to the Imam leaving a small buffer around Aden'.

Every South Arabian tribesman is honour bound to avenge the murder of a kinsman. Tribal feuds became bloodier. As the casualties mounted the weaker tribes were steadily pushed up the sides of the barren mountains or out into the deserts away from the water and the wadi beds. Often a tribe would be both hunter and hunted, feuds which had begun for some long forgotten reason continued over the years in a seemingly endless trail of blood. Trade was brought to a standstill and those who held fertile land could only till it under the rifles of their friends lest they fall to some neighbour with whom they were at war. Anarchy was king in a country whose people had famine and fear as their constant companions.

Gradually the feeling was borne in upon the officials of Aden that if the British were to justify the continuation of the Protectorate then something would have to be done. The start was modest enough. From time immemorial the tribes had respected the freedom of the road. Even in times of war it was possible to move around the country by means of systems of 'companions' who escorted the traveller through their own tribal area, handing him on to a similar 'companion' in the next, and so on. In the early 1930s banditry and highway robbery had become rife and the fee paid for 'companions' rose so the number of merchants brave enough to venture far outside Aden fell in proportion. Initially British political officers such as Belhaven and Rickards went into the country with the sole intention of trying to keep the roads open. Steadily the scope of their mission grew wider as they became more and more in demand as mediators in tribal disputes.

The real breakthrough came when Harold Ingrams was sent to the Hadhramaut, which lies in the east far from the troublesome Yemeni frontiers. At this time it boasted two recognised governments, Qaiti and Kathiri. Although the once powerful ruling houses were run down and their writ ran no further than their city walls, it was something to start on. Little was known about the country and the attentions of successive Residents in Aden was confined to what Ingrams has described as the occasional 'How D'you Do and Goodbye' visit.

Ingrams was given the task of trying to bring some form of ordered government to the area. The mission and the man coincided. Ingrams had first become fascinated with the Hadhramaut from the tales of Hadhramis he had met whilst serving in Zanzibar. Far from the restricting encumbrances of the cable office and the telephone he set to work with a will. Stumping around the countryside he made a direct approach to the tribes, holding out the prospect of a three-year truce. The country was sick of bloodshed and the results were spectacular. When Aden learnt of what Ingrams was doing he was promptly told to desist but by that time the truce was almost in the bag. Between thirteen and fourteen hundred tribal leaders had agreed to it and peace had come at last to the Hadhramaut. In his dealings Ingrams had always been careful to act in the name of the rulers and not the government. Nevertheless the government and its air



1 *Shibam, 1932.*



2 *The Friday Treat. Sana: Imam Ahmad Hamid al Din attending an execution, surrounded by members of his family and attendants, with young princes in the foreground.*



3 *One for the family album. Captain Johnny Ricketts in front of the Egyptian transport aircraft he prevented from taking off at Lodar. Colonel Ricketts commanded the Welsh Guards in the Falklands, 1982.*



4 *The Bedouin Boys' School, Mukalla, established by the British to provide recruits for the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion.*

power were always discreetly there in the background. Further, being an Englishman and therefore a neutral, the tribesmen could accept his mediation without the all important loss of face. There can be no doubt that they did so with relief.

The fame of 'Ingrams' Peace' spread and his colleagues, operating with the grudging approval of the Aden government, achieved similar success in the west. So zealous did these peacemakers become that the Governor in Aden, exasperated at mutual complaints of poaching, drew a line dividing his officers' territories between east and west. Henceforth British relations with the Eastern Aden Protectorate as it became known, would be conducted through a Resident in Mukalla, and those in the Western Aden Protectorate through a British Agent based on Aden Colony. Both posts remained under the authority of the Governor.

This was the first step and the second was bound to follow. Once again the east led the way. In 1937 and 1938 the Qaiti and Kathiri Sultans signed advisory treaties with the British, under which they agreed to accept a resident adviser for the 'good government and welfare of their countries.' To the rulers it meant British support to maintain and extend their authority: to the Colonial Office it meant introducing British notions of good government and development. The two points of view did not always coincide and the 'advice' was often imperceptible from 'direction'.

The success of these treaties in the east led to attempts at their introduction in the west. Here the position was more difficult. None of the states approached the size of either Qaiti or Kathiri and Lahej alone boasted anything resembling a state government. There was a constant background of tribal turbulence and Yemeni interference so that to construct 'status' out of the loosest and most fluid of tribal confederations was a slow and unrewarding task. By the end of the Second World War only five of the eleven principal chiefs had signed the Treaty and the 'forward policy', as it was grandly called, had ground to a halt. It was particularly unfortunate that in three of the five states which had consented to be 'advised' the rulers had been deposed for one reason or another. The Fadhli Sultan was as mad as the Amir of Dhala was cruel, while the ruler of Lower Yafa' fell somewhere between the two. The other chiefs, alarmed at their examples, regarded 'advice' as a euphemism for control and held aloof. But the twentieth century would not be held at bay for ever. The main factor which swung the situation towards the British was renewed intervention in the Protectorate by the Yemenis. Nothing was more likely to throw the Shafa'i chiefs into the arms of the British than the spectre of a Zaidi Imam hovering over the horizon. For his part the Imam of the Yemen regarded the British 'forward policy' as a direct controversion of the Treaty of Sana and set about counterbalancing increased British influence in the area with some intrigues of his own. They were successful in stirring up short-lived tribal revolts in Shaib and Dhala, but the real result of their machinations was the very opposite of what had been intended. Fear of renewed Yemeni domination broke the back of opposition and with one eye over their

shoulders the chiefs hastened down to Aden to sign up.* There was a gap of six years while some of the prouder or, at the other end of the scale, the remote rulers made their minds up but by 1954 even the suspicious and eccentric rulers of Mahra and Socotra had been coaxed into conforming.

Advisers† to the rulers had a delicate and difficult task. Their prime aims were to speed up development, keep the peace and try to drag the country into the twentieth century. Often these aims were in direct conflict with the wishes of the ruler concerned and customs of the country, which although still acceptable in South Arabia were distinctly out of place in a modern and liberal world. For instance, the slaves of the Qaiti Sultan were tactfully transformed into the nucleus of the local defence force and the habit of the Wahidi Shaikhs whereby an enemy was boxed in a crate and shipped out to sea, the more he was hated the smaller the holes, was allowed to fall into disuse.

Wells were dug, roads cut through the mountains and doctors and teachers introduced to areas where they had never been seen before. A cotton growing scheme in the potentially rich Abyan delta flourished, bringing undreamed of wealth to the farmers. A strong government kept the peace, yet, although the land seemingly prospered the gun remained the tribesman's most prized possession, and the ways of the people remained unchanged.

*The list of advisory treaties: Qaiti 1937, Kathiri 1938, Baihan 1941, Fadhli, Dhala and Lower Aulaqi 1944, Lower Yafa' 1946, Haushabi 1947, Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom, Audhali and Lahej 1947, Wahidi 1949, Mahra 1954.

† Advisers were a varied lot, most were able, honest unpaid and courageous men who dedicated their working lives to South Arabia. As might be expected there was a fair sprinkling of characters.

What is one to think of Fitzroy Somerset apparently trapped for three weeks in a tiny fort, who was found by a relieving force of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry sitting in the sun reading a book? He looked up in astonishment—'What, gentlemen, can I do for you?' The reply from soldiers at the end of a six hour toil up the precipitous Jebel Jihaf goes unrecorded.

Then there was the golf enthusiast who appointed himself Founder, Chairman, Committee and sole professional of the Baihan Golf Club. Noticing in the Guinness Book of Records that the record for the longest hole in the world was held in South Africa he marched off into the Rub al Khali, and taking a piece of especially printed notepaper wrote claiming the record. Informed, the South Africans made an adjustment. With 1,000 or so miles of empty space in front of him the Baihan Chairman again extended his course. Consternation in Johannesburg and shortly afterwards at Government House where the Governor was asked to consider a request for verification.

In Sayun Richard Eteridge, when the ancient cannon which served as the Ramadhan gun broke down, resorted to C.S. Forester's Hornblower for instructions to repair it. Not all advisers were as bright or ingenious.

The adviser for the Northern Deserts many hundreds of miles from the nearest town received a circular from the Department of Health warning of the dangers of malaria. A man of leonine features and magnificent physical presence, he strode to the well of the Saar and peering into the murky depths pronounced it insanitary. Several gallons of paraffin were then poured down the shaft. The Bedouin for whom the well was the only source of water had watched proceedings with increasing alarm and now began to show serious signs of discontent. Unruffled, he turned to his critics. 'Behold, O Arabs, have I not your interests at heart. Think ye I am ignorant of modern science,' and with that dropped a flaming rag into the water. The explosion was heard many miles away and the RAF found themselves ferrying in emergency supplies.

Later, the same officer, now at a desk job and in charge of charities, contrived to lose the Cancer Relief Fund at a poker party for his friends.

Even before the complication of their 'advisory' policy the British were already thinking about the next step. The twenty-three petty shaikhdoms which made up the Protectorates were anachronisms which could never survive separately. Clearly some form of union was required if they were to ever make their way in the modern world. The idea of a federation began to be considered in both London and Aden but the first plan to be produced was originated by C K N Trevaskis (later Sir Kennedy) in 1952 when he was serving as British Agent for the Western Aden Protectorate. It provided for two separate federal areas, one for the Eastern Protectorate and one for the Western. The scheme took into account the more advanced development in the east, its different historical background and the tendency of the rulers not to co-operate with their brethren in the West. Initially the British Governor in Aden would preside over both councils and as a first step to unity the twenty-three existing customs organisations would be eliminated.

The plan was presented to the rulers at Government House, Aden in January 1954. There were only four absentees. Awadh bin Salih, the eccentric ruler of the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate, had not left his Nisab house for fifteen years. The Sultan of Haushabi, at dispute with his neighbour over their common border, had let it be known that if Lahej was attending then he was not. The Sultan of Qaiti was too infirm and the Sultan of Mahra on his far away island of Socotra had barely heard of Aden and had no idea what everybody was talking about.

The rulers welcomed the plan in principle and returned to their states to study it. In the meantime the Imam Ahmad who had succeeded his father as the ruler of the Yemen, decided to take a hand. He saw the 'Federation' as a contravention of the Treaty of Sana and a direct threat to his aspirations and authority. Tribal troubles were once again stirred up on the borders and the weaker chiefs were sent warnings of the dire consequences of falling in with the 'plot of imperialism'.

The Imam* realised that the time had come for operations on a major scale. He found his opportunity in Aulaqi country which was divided between three states, Lower Aulaqi, the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom and the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate.

Between Aulaqi and Dathina tribes to the west lies a sullen mass of rock and mountain with the Wadi Halib the only pass. From ancient times the masters of this wilderness have been the Ahl Shams Rabiz who earned a precarious living playing one side off against the other and taxing the few merchants who dared to pass through their land. They were already chaffing under the loose authority exercised by the Aulaqi Sultan in Nisab when the British decided to drive a motorable road through the Wadi

*The Yemenis, particularly the Zaidis, regarded the Protectorate chiefs with some contempt. This is exemplified by a meeting between the Imam's representative, the Qadir Ahmed Sayaghi, and the newly appointed Amir of Dhala, Sha'aful bin Ali, accompanied by British representatives in May 1956 in Dhala. The Qadhi refused to talk with the Amir and referred to him in a loud voice as 'You Shaikh of the day before yesterday.'



5 *British Commander-in-Chief, General Harrington, inspecting the Wahidi Federal Guard. Their immaculate turnout prepared by courtesy of their womenfolk concealed inherent unreliability.*

Hatib. Seeing this as a threat to their livelihood the tribesmen went off to the Yemen to receive money and arms which would enable them to destroy it. Their thin torsos, bare except for a short kilt and dyed blue with woad, quivered with indignation when they spoke of these 'oppressions of colonisation'.

On their return the Rabiz began a campaign of tribal terrorism. Crops were burnt, pumps smashed and flocks hamstrung. The tiny government fort at Robat became a nightly target for snipers. Every convoy had to be escorted, every hilltop guarded.

In June a convoy *en route* to Robat was ambushed by the Rabiz, three officers, two British and one Arab, were killed together with five Arab soldiers. In the following month the fort was abandoned, an event which the Rabiz celebrated by blowing it sky high along with a local resident who was suspected of collaboration. In the meantime the rot had spread. A company of Levies refused to soldier on in Nisab, and there were tribal revolts in Dathina and Audhali.

By late autumn the troubles had subsided. Left alone in their hills the Rabiz had nothing to shoot at and the Imam's attention was diverted by troubles at home. In April 1955 he faced a full scale coup organised by his brothers Abdullah and Abbas. The rebels held him prisoner in his palace at Taiz but were unable to agree on policy or on what they should do with him. In the meantime his son al Badr had raised the northern tribes and was

marching to the rescue. In the crisis the Imam appealed to the rebel troops to join him. With some relief the soldiers agreed, and the tables were turned. There was nothing squeamish about the Imam and he had no hesitation in dealing with his former captors. They were publicly beheaded, the relatives of the condemned bribing the headsmen to ensure a quick end. Shortly afterwards grisly photographs of the executions began to appear in the Aden bazaars. At first it was thought that these were distributed by the Imam's opponents, but it later transpired that the Imam himself, anxious to make known the fate of all who conspired against him, organised the distribution.

To keep up the pressure on the British wider support was sought. An Arab League mission visited Taiz in the autumn of 1955 and although they cannot have been much impressed by his arguments felt bound to support the Imam as a fellow member. In 1956 both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union opened embassies in Sana and in June 1956 a Soviet cargo vessel slipped into the tiny port of Salif with a cargo of Russian arms, the first of many.

Faced with external pressure the rulers in the Western Protectorate asked the British to delay the plan for federation. In the east it had already floundered on the rocks of inter-state jealousy and suspicion. Wahidi destroyed the balance. At first the ruler let it be known he preferred to join the Eastern bloc, then the Western, then having committed himself to everybody, neither. Kathiri was now more or less on its own with the Qaiti, and fearing the domination and intentions of its now more powerful neighbour also dropped out.

Secure once again and with unaccustomed diplomatic support the Imam opened the 1957 season in style. His prime target was Dhala. Ever since 1948 the former Amir, Haidara, had been brooding across the border in Qataba. Now the Imam espoused his cause with gusto. Where before rifles had been handed out in dozens they were now distributed in hundreds. Very soon nearly every Dhala tribe was subverted and the murder of a well-known peacemaker became the signal for general revolt. The rulers of Alawi and Muflahi, small states on the borders of Dhala, absconded to the Yemen. They were shortly followed by the Ruler of Dhala's most powerful vassal the Qutaibi Shaikh of Radfan. Tribal risings broke out in Audhali in the centre and Baihan in the north-east. Nearer Aden the Ahl Nakhai took the field and threatened to cut the roads to the east. The situation was serious and the British took firm action themselves and encouraged the rulers to do likewise. The RAF persuaded the Dhala tribes to return to their allegiance whilst Sharif Hussain in Baihan and Naib Ja'abil in Audhali sallied across the border and routed their opponents. The Ahl Nakhai soon withdrew. The Alawi, Maflahi and Qutaibi Shaikhs came home and made their peace in time for the late harvest.

Times were changing in the Middle East. The once paramount British influence was fast on the wane. They had withdrawn from the great base astride the Suez Canal. A new dynamic figure in the person of Colonel

Jamal Abdul Nasser had appeared on the scene with the gospel of Arab Socialism to unite the Arab world. In the years to follow came the Anglo-French disaster at Suez. Then came the overthrow of the pro-Western regime in Iraq and the subsequent collapse of the Baghdad Pact. The Cyprus revolt followed and everywhere the British were seen to be on the retreat.

The effects of these developments were soon felt in South Arabia. Cairo Radio, with its steady stream of anti-British invective became part of the daily lives of the people. Tribal uprising was given a new lustre as the revolt of the Arab people against Western Imperialism; every opponent of the British was a hero and every friend a traitor.

The powerful effect of Cairo Radio over the years cannot be underestimated. By its very nature propaganda must accurately reflect the policy of the government which employs it. If the government is weak, conciliatory and vacillating, then this will show up in its propaganda. Despite its distortions, exaggerations and often ludicrous lies, the crux of the message of Cairo Radio from 1954 onwards was always the same—'the British are the enemies of the Arabs,' 'they will leave you in the lurch' and 'they are going.'

In 1958 the Imam made his final attempt on Dhala. The Amir Haidara was established on the Jebel Jihaf Massif supported by regular Yemeni troops. These were promptly ejected by the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL) supported by two companies of British troops and for good measure the RAF demolished the barracks at Qataba. This was the Imam's last fling, he had become tired and suspicious of his new found friends, his health was failing and in April 1959 he travelled to Italy for medical treatment, leaving al Badr as regent. The latter attempted to use the opportunity to institute a programme of mild reform. In the absence of the Imam's strong hand the Regular Armed Forces mutinied for more pay. Al Badr appealed to the tribes for support and this was forthcoming only on payment of a large sum. In August the Imam returned and at once tried to retrieve the money. The tribes refused. The Imam then arranged to meet the Shaikh of the Usaymat, paramount Shaikh of the Great Hashid Confederation, together with his son under safe conduct. A heated argument took place during which the Imam ordered both his guests to be seized and taken to their stronghold at Hajjah and executed. The Hashid never forgave the Imam for this act of treachery and within a few years were able to revenge themselves on his son.

The Imam was equally decisive in dealing with the Egyptians whom he discovered plotting behind his back. The diplomats were expelled and the Imam broadcast a scurrilous poem attacking President Nasser from Sana's radio. From then on the Yemen ceased to be a member of the United Arab States in all but name. In July 1958 Yemeni delegates met with the British at Diradowa in Ethiopia to seal the truce.

Ahmad was a sick man dependent on morphine. He suffered from hallucinations and increasingly retired to a special room fitted out with

coloured lights, toys and dozens of fans.*

Coinciding with the Imam's last assault on Dhala the British faced a more sophisticated nationalism nearer Aden. The South Arabia League (SAL) was founded in 1951 with the object of bringing about an independent South Arabia free from any outside ties, including North Yemen. The general aims of the policy were not too different from those of the British, but it was the method of achieving it which brought the two sides into conflict. The founders were the Jifri clan. At one time traditional advisors to the Shaikh of the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom they became increasingly redundant after the ruler signed his advisory treaties with the British, and part of the family moved to Lahej where they became friends and confidants to the Sultan Ali bin Abdul Karim KBE.

The Sultan succeeded his brother who had fled to the Yemen in 1952. This followed a wild night when, more than usually irritated with his relatives, he had had three of them dragged from their beds and tied to stakes in the garden, and then shot them himself from the flat roof of the house. His younger brother Ali was clever, ambitious and well-educated. The Sultan of Lahej had always been pre-eminent amongst the chiefs of the Protectorate and he strove to re-establish this position. Advised by the Jifris considerable progress was made in reforming state administration and extending the cotton plantations. On the political front progress was less easy. The Sultan tried to persuade the British and his fellow rulers to grant Lahej over-riding powers in the Federation then under discussion. With his demands finding little favour he turned to the League. A Federation office was organised in Lahej and elsewhere in the state 'to educate the people' as the Sultan explained. The line taken was bitterly anti-British in tone. This was the time of the Suez crisis and the League lost no opportunity to twist the lion's tail.

The results of the Sultan's attempts to spread his influence outside Lahej were mixed. In the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom where Jifri influence was still strong, the Sultan, supported by the League, backed one side in an unseemly squabble that was taking place over the succession. The League organised demonstrations complete with Egyptian flags and loud speakers and Sultan Ali let it be known that as Ruler of Lahej it was customary for him to be consulted in such matters. A committee of rulers set up to resolve the issue was a fiasco when they could not agree where to meet. In the end his opponents proved more practical, by supplying their protégés with the arms and money necessary to ensure their election.

After the defeat in Aulaqi the League looked around for other opportunities and it was not long before their efforts were rewarded.

*After the revolution the Imam's possessions were put out on display and can still be seen by the curious in a special museum in Taiz. Glass cases preserve a vast collection of clothing, paste jewellery and bath soap as well as superb rifles and a teaset presented by the British. For a small sum visitors may be accompanied by the official guide, a mute.

The rich farmlands of the Abyan Basin were shared by Lower Yafa' and Fadhli. In the case of Lower Yafa' it represented the only part of the state to be administered. The rest, more often ranges of mountains bisected by the occasional narrow wadi, stretched away to the Yemeni border, a forbidden territory, inhabited by fiercely independent tribesmen who stoutly resisted any interference to the old ways, its customs and superstitions. The Ruler of Yafa' had a mystical as well as temporal hold over his people to whom he personified the spirit of Yafa' in human flesh. Sultan Aidrus was well qualified to be the ruler of such a people being at the same time half mad and half wise. An old man by this time, a normal conversation would often degenerate into incomprehensible ranting with foam flecking the old man's lips and his eyes dancing a fandango to a time of their own. Something of a shock to those who had not met him before. The Yafais adored him.

The sultan's eldest son Muhammad was a chip off the old block, volatile, impetuous and deeply suspicious. Yet he could be charming and retained a magical hold over his people. Muhammad was appointed to the Abyan Board and became Naib for that part of the state in which the Board operated. He became a supporter of the League and its chief agent in the area.

Soon he realised that the farmers of Lahej were receiving more cash for their crop than those of Abyan. The Abyan Board had made considerable capital investment and the dividends reflected the repayment of loans. Muhammad claimed that the imperialists were exploiting the people and, backed by the League, canvassed this idea amongst the farmers. Conditions within the Board worsened and when the British refused to bomb a Yafa'i shaikh who had annoyed him, Muhammad decamped to the hills. His nominees were ordered to agree to nothing in his absence. The work of the Board ground to a halt. No cotton could be sold, no dividends distributed, and no crops sown until Muhammad returned. Eventually the patience of the Board, many of whom were farmers themselves, ran thin, and they elected one of their members, Haidira Mansur as Naib to take Muhammad's place. The following day Muhammad suddenly appeared at the head of a tribal army, rampaged through Ja'ar, the administrative centre for the cotton growing area, and carried off £10,000 from the treasury. For a few weeks it looked as if Mother Yafa' was coming to claim her own. Muhammad and his commandos made forays against the crops of those who had opposed him, but the new order held and Muhammad disappeared into his mountains not to emerge until after the British had left.

1958 was a crucial year for the League. They had failed in the Upper Audhali Shaikhdom and although a great deal of fuss had been caused they had little to show for their efforts in Lower Yafa'. The leaders of the party

had for some time been in contact with the Imam Ahmad then making his final assault on the Protectorates.*

Army convoys going north to the threatened State of Dhala were often held up by demonstrating crowds. The ruler of the tiny State of Alawi who it was said never slept without the permission of his neighbour Lahej was the first to depart to the Yemen. The League's hand was seen behind the revolt of the Ahl Nalkhai and in Aulaqi Jifri supporters, the Ahl Bubakhr bin Farid, forsook their oaths of reconciliation and took to the hills. The British remained firm, the Imam was defeated, the Ahl Nalkhai went home without firing a shot, the Ahl Bubakhr manoeuvred with the Yemen.

On the political front the Sultan and the League suffered equally severe setbacks. The other rulers alarmed at the activities of the Imam and growing Egyptian influence approached the Governor of Aden with a request to resurrect plans for federation, plans in which the Sultan of Lahej played little part. The Jifris issued a stream of propaganda against the 'fake federation', known troublemakers were given asylum and efforts made to subvert the APL and Government Guards. These were not wholly unsuccessful. There were a number of grenade incidents in Aden, carried out by soldiers, and a British medical officer attached to the APL was grenaded whilst asleep. The Sultan demanded independence and prepared to abrogate his treaty with the British bringing in the Egyptians instead. This was the final straw. Sir William Luce, then Governor of Aden, ordered the arrest of the Jifri brothers who escaped to the Yemen. Sultan Ali left for London to complain to the British government and on receiving no redress moved to Rome and thence to Cairo, having first made arrangements for the Lahej Regular Army to decamp to the Yemen complete with brass band. The British government formally withdrew recognition and a successor was elected by the Lahej electoral college who had taken their leaders, discomfiture with amazing calm.

The power of the League was broken but the affair had an interesting sequel. The new sultan, Fadhl bin Ali, went on a tour of his state and sent word to his Director of Agriculture, Qahtan al Shaabi, that he was about to call for lunch. When the messenger, Fadhl Hassan Aulaqi, an Arab official of the Protectorate Service, arrived at the agricultural offices, the director who had been implicated in the shadier activities of the League, hitherto unsuspected, thought he was about to be arrested and took fright. He leapt into a Landrover and, prudently collecting the agricultural funds on the way, fled to the Yemen.

In Cairo the League was soon rent by internal squabbles. In 1962 al Shaabi, who acted as Public Relations Officer, was accused of embezzling party funds. He took refuge in the Yemen and joined the 'Shaikhs of the South', a rather tired collection of dissidents still drawing meagre pensions from the Imam.

*From an early date the correspondence was intercepted and read by the British who were consequently able to anticipate every move made by the League and the Sultan.

After the humiliation of the League and defeat of the Imam the rulers began to understand the new threat posed to their existence by the Egyptian brand of Arab nationalism,and within eighteen months six of the more important were pressing for agreement on new plans for federation. The British doubly welcomed this approach because it removed the stigma of British inspiration from the federation proposals just when some new form of arrangement was needed to protect Aden, then acquiring a new importance in British defence thinking.

The negotiation of agreement between the six states on a federal constitution and on a new agreement with Britain took longer to conclude than was at first expected, but eventually the Federation of South Arabia was born on 11 February 1959. *

The Dathina Confederation, the Lower Aulaqi, Haushabi and Lahej Sultanates had all asked to join before the ceremony but arrangements for them were not complete until much later.

Eventually all states of the western area joined except Upper Yafa'.

A capital city, al Ittihad,† was built for the new states on the borders of Aden and Agrabi.

An embryo civil service was created and state functions were put in charge of ministers. More important, the British who had never been lavish in their aid to the area, before the Second World War it had never exceeded £100,000 and in 1954 was only £800,000, produced £5 million to fund the project. Pleasure that the Federation had at last got underway was not the only reason for Britain's generosity. The loss of British bases in Iraq and Egypt and uncertainty about those in Cyprus and Kenya greatly increased the importance of Aden in British defence planning. Aden was regarded as a vital link in the safeguarding of British interests in the Gulf and policy east. The formation of the Federation was an important step in creating a buffer to protect the base.

For the first four years of its existence the Federation made steady progress. There was little dissident activity, the land knew peace and a measure of prosperity. Revolution and anarchy were at hand.

* Founder members of the Federation, initially known as the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South, were Baihan, Fadhli, Dhala, Lower Yafa', Audhali and the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom.

† Unity City

Chapter II
Aden

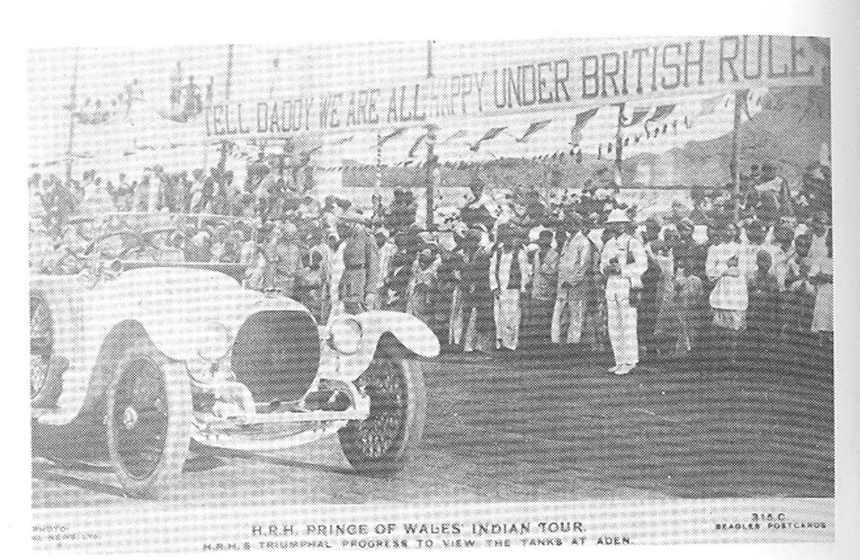
Tell Daddy we are all happy under British rule.
Banner welcoming Edward Prince of Wales
on his visit to Aden, July 1921.

If thirty years of peace and outward stability for the Protectorates was one of Britain's greatest achievements in the area, then the development of Aden as a port and as a social and political force in Arab affairs was surely another.

When the British seized Aden they found virtually nothing. The port, long neglected and abused by its rulers, had fallen into decay so that Captain Haines was able to note in his diary that he found the community in a 'condition of most indigent poverty'. 'How lamentable a contrast', he went on, 'to Aden's former unrivalled celebrity, its impenetrable fortifications and flourishing commerce.' Under the British, Aden soon began to revive, first as a coaling station and then, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, its harbour became famous again as the first port east of Suez on the imperial highroad to India and Australia.

The genius of the British administration allowed all races to trade and prosper so that Aden once again flourished as a commercial centre. Opportunity was unrestricted. The Swiss-French family of Anton Besse* made a vast fortune out of the trade with Africa, the British themselves tended to concentrate on the port where Luke Thomas, Peninsular & Orient, Cory Brothers and Mitchell Cotts maintained major branches. The banks reflected the various interests, the Bank of India, the Habib, the Chartered, the British Bank of the Middle East, the Arab Bank. The great Parsee Trading Companies of Palanjee, Dinshaw and Bhicajee Cowasjee, made their fortunes in Aden. Shafai merchants, such as Hayel Said Amam so controlled trade with their country that by 1962 80% of North Yemen's goods came through Aden. Hadramis were everywhere with particular interest in property and construction.

*Anton Besse was generous. Aden Technical College and many other social causes were the beneficiaries of numerous bequests. He also gave over £1 million to Oxford University to found St Anthony's College.



6 *The Prince of Wales' visit to Aden*

In 1954 British Petroleum built the refinery at Little Aden so that in 1964 Aden could boast to being the fifth largest bunkering port in the world after Rotterdam, Liverpool, London and New York.

In all this commercial activity the peoples of the Protectorate were not involved in any major fashion. The rulers and warrior classes felt trade was beneath them and preferred to use agents such as the Persian family of Hassan Ali* to conduct their business affairs. For lesser folk tradition and lack of education prevented their major involvement. In return the Protectorates were not a major market for the Adeni merchants. Lack of direct Protectorate interest in Aden's prosperity and Adeni ignorance of the hinterland was a basic factor in the difficulties in merging Aden with the Federation.

By the early 1960s, when Aden's prosperity was at its height, the magnificent harbour was filled with every conceivable type of shipping. Great ocean liners whose passengers poured ashore to buy tax-free bargains from the bracelet of shops which clustered under the shadow of the jagged hills, oil tankers calling at the British Petoleum refinery on the other side of the bay, stately dhows making their annual journeys from Zanzibar and East Africa to the Persian Gulf, bumboats and battleships, tramps and

* Amongst the later activities of the Hassan Ali family were the regular purchases of arms and ammunition which the rulers were allowed to import by the British. In 1967 2,000 ·303 rifles at an average price of £15 were exported by the Crown Agents, Wadia Hassan. Ali pocketed £5 commission in addition to what he received from his principals. The rulers sold the weapons for as much as £100 a time. The British also rewarded tribesmen with like presents, so that it came as no surprise that many dissidents were armed with British weapons firing British bullets.



trawlers, all bringing affluence and employment to the Adenis.

At the same time the British decision to make Aden her principal military base in the Middle East injected a further £19 million into the economy. Aden boomed. Within the space of two years the number of cars on the roads trebled. Modern blocks of flats sprang up as merchants competed to lease them to the British services and their families. Whole new towns appeared in the formerly sleepy suburbs of Maala and Khormaksar. Labour was at a premium, wages rose and with them the living standards of the people climbed steadily upwards.

The Adenis were rich and furthermore they were educated. Ever since the British had landed they had been spared the misfortunes of their brethren in the Protectorates. In a sea of turbulence Aden was an island of peace and good order. From early days there were schools and a medical service. No arms were allowed to be carried in the streets and there were courts of justice where a decision did not depend on a family connection or a bribe.

Aden owed much to its cosmopolitan character. Somalis, Yemenis, Indians and Jews had all settled under the protecting wing of the British, influencing the culture and language of the people. Nevertheless Aden was always emotionally Arab and civil strife between the various communities was never far beneath the surface. After the influence and number of Jews had been reduced by the riots of 1931 and 1947, it was the Indians and Pakistanis whom the Arabs regarded with the greatest suspicion. Although many of those who were Muslims had intermarried with the Arabs, they were never wholly accepted, a fact of life which more than one would-be Arab-Indian nationalist was to learn to his bitterness and cost.

When the Colony was administered from Bombay it was natural that many of the clerks and middle-ranking government officials were Indian. Being more sophisticated than their Arab neighbours, they also came to provide many of the lawyers and doctors as well as a large proportion of the powerful merchant community. In short, Aden was in danger of becoming an 'Indian Colony' and the British 'rulers' tended to be cushioned from daily contact with their Arabian subjects by a waddage of English-speaking babus. The process received its first check in 1932 when the control of Aden passed out of the hands of the Bombay Presidency to the Central Government of India. In 1937 in response to Arab petition, the Colonial Office took over the administration. At the time this development as considered an act of liberation.

Political government in the Colony took the same well-trodden road taken by British colonies elsewhere, In 1947 a Legislative Council was set up and eight years later it boasted four elected members. By the time the ill-fated Legislative Assembly embarked on its final term of office in 1964, sixteen of the twenty-one members were elected, four nominated and one, the Attorney-General, ex-officio.

Organised political activity began in Aden with the Moslem Association founded in 1946. This drew its inspiration, not from the Arab world, but

India and Pakistan, whose achievement of independence caused great excitement amongst their fellow countrymen in Aden.
Aden was also the base for the 'Free Yemenis', a group of intellectuals dedicated to the overthrow of the Imami regime. In 1948 with more traditional forces they assassinated the Imam Yahya* and set up a short-lived provisional government, before the coup was brutally crushed by the Imam's son Ahmad. Two Adenis who were to become prominent in South Arabia, Muhammad Ali Luqman and Muhammad Hasan Obali, played leading parts in the coup and after their return to Aden founded the Aden Association. Still much influenced by Indian social dominance and by memories of the troubles in the Protectorates they stood for Aden for the Adenis and modest constructural advance, and as such, dominated the early sessions of the Legislative Assembly. They pinned their hopes for advancement on the visit of Lord Lloyd, Under Secretary of State to the Colonies. They were disappointed, addressing the Assembly the Minister made it clear that he entertained no such ideas. 'There has been much speculation recently about the political future of Aden Colony. Such speculation, unrelated to practical possibilities is harmful to the commercial interests of the Colony', and went on, 'Her Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the importance of Aden both strategically and economically within the Commonwealth is such that they cannot foresee the possibility of any fundamental relaxation of their responsibilities for the Colony.'

The Association was snubbed and the British had missed an opportunity. The Federation was forming in the Protectorates and by granting Aden early self-government and the prospect of independence with the Federation when it came into being may have allowed time to help keep the political initiative. Already more discordant voices were being heard.

The United National Front (UNF) first made its appearance in 1954 as a party demanding the total elimination of the British presence and the merger of Yemen, the Protectorates and even Oman into a single state. Certain of its founders were found amongst the more extreme surviving Free Yemenis and others amongst the organisers of the vicious anti-Jewish riots in 1948. It probably began in one of the football and social clubs in which Aden abounded. The movement very quickly formed close ties with the burgeoning Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) which had been set up with the help of British trades unions. The movement owed its

*There is a coffee shop on the road south of Sana where the Imam Yahya and his grandson were gunned down. The heroic manner of his death as he tried to shield the young boy with his body made a profound impression on public opinion and helped his son Ahmad defeat the plotters.

It is said that the killing fulfilled an old prophecy. Many years before when the Imam was fighting the Turks he had been told that he would live so long as no impression of his features was published. Consequently cameras were absolutely forbidden and visitors searched before entering his presence. A few weeks before a French Canadian journalist had sketched the Imam from memory. The portrait appeared in the Washington Post the day the Imam died.

inspiration from Egypt and some of its funds from the Imam, who was not unwilling to dabble in the muddy waters of Aden politics. Due to its organisation at street level the Front could always be relied on to produce a mob for a given occasion.

In 1957 both organisations broke up. The Aden Association destroyed itself on a social rather than a political issue and this concerned the hallowed subject of qat.* Qat is a small, mildly narcotic shrub which grows in the Yemen, Ethiopa and Kenya. The green leaves which look and taste rather like privet are chewed and produce an effect similar to that of benzedrine; an effect which the Adenis discovered was heightened if washed down by copious quantities of Coca Cola. Qat chewing was the national pastime of the Yemen. Every afternoon the whole male population seemed to retire into the house or clubs and begin a rhythmic and bovine munching, cheeks bulging with a wad of green cud. There was not a man in the place who did not seem to be determined to dribble, spit and chew his way through enough green stuff to feed a cow. Qat customs varied. In Dhala, whose people were lucky, or unlucky enough to grow their own supplies, the Amirs would run up and down the hill after lunch to gain the necessary appetite for the afternoon session. In Aden there was the *mabraz* which with classic understatement means 'the place where things emerge.' This was a qat chewers' club. Any number of the fraternity would steadily get more and more excited and incoherent. It is worth remembering that many of the decisions which were to affect South Arabia's future were made whilst the participants were similarly engaged.

In Aden qat had reached the proportions of a national catastrophe. The people spent more than £1 million a year on the stuff, and it was not unusual for an ordinary labourer to spend half his salary on qat whilst his family went hungry. In 1957 a Bill banning qat from the Colony was passed unopposed by the Legislative Assembly. Within weeks the village of Dar Saad just across the border in Lahej had been turned into one vast qat chewing den. Huge convoys of cars jammed the roads out of Aden as the people, eager for qat, made nonsense of the ban.

The Aden Association now split. Bayumi, a great qat chewer himself, called for the lifting of the ban which upset Muhammad Ali Luqman who led the anti-qat chewing lobby. Bayumi won, as he was bound to, and Luqman went off in a huff and founded his own party, 'The People's Congress'. Although Luqman became the first Adeni to air his views before the United Nations Committee of 24 on Colonisation in New York, his party was not popular. The Adenis were already suspicious of the vast Luqmani clan, which numbered over 140 strong. Luqmani males held key positions throughout the length and breadth of the Colony's government and commercial life and his attempts to ban qat won him further unpopularity. This was a pity because Muhammad Ali was a wise old

*Introduced into the Yemen from Ethiopia along with coffee in 1543.

gentleman and his calm counsel would have benefited his fellow countrymen in the years ahead.*

In time Bayumi founded the United National Party (UNP) which was to become the rallying point for those Adenis who believed in federation.

The break up of the United National Front was a much more squalid affair and basically concerned money. The Trade Union movement in Aden had grown rapidly. The first unions had been registered in 1953 and by 1956 the number had risen to 25, all of which were affiliated to a newly formed body called the Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC). All members of the ATUC's executive council were office bearers of the UNF and through unions, funds collected from the workers financed the party. Some of the funds were embezzled by members, union and non-union alike, and other sums were misused. Union members accused the rest of living it up at their expense and the whole party collapsed in mutual recriminations of treachery and bad faith. From there on until the founding of the People's Socialist Party (PSP) in 1962 it was the ATUC which provided the more vocal opposition to the British and their Federation. Their tactics in the main consisted of political strikes which in the end provoked the Aden government to retaliate by passing an Industrial Relations Ordinance making it illegal to strike unless the case was first brought to arbitration.

After the break up of the UNF, the ATUC was comparatively quiescent. Much of their thunder was stolen by the South Arabian League (SAL) which was basically a Protectorate party and organised the first 'nationalist' revolt in 1958. The party's objects were a united South Arabia but they attempted to bring it about through the then Ruler of Lahej who saw a chance of regaining the glories of Lahej and the prominence of her sultan in the affairs of South Arabia. The details of the revolt are discussed elsewhere but suffice it to say the object was not so much unity of South Arabia as unity of the rest with Lahej. The movement was strongly supported by Egypt and the Yemen and failed when the leaders took flight.

By 1960 the parties were already beginning to polarise into those which supported the British, including the Federal government, 'the right', and those which supported the UAR and Arab nationalism, 'the left'. Once battle was joined in South Arabia there could never be any accommodation between the two, it was a case of all power for the winner and death or exile for the loser. The so-called 'moderates' consisted of those who had not

* The Luqmans founded the most advanced newspapers at that time in the Arabian Peninsula. The Arabian *Fatat al Jazirat* competed with the equally influential *Al Ayyam* edited by Muhammad Ali Bashara Heel and a host of lesser titles. In the British tradition the press was free. Luqman's English weekly, *The Aden Chronicle*, was widely read by the European community and the forces.

Its earnest columns were occasionally the target of practical jokes. In May 1961 the archaeological review faithfully reprinted a letter from a correspondent who claimed to have discovered an interesting metal pot on a well-known Lahej dig and asked the help of readers to interpret its inscription which read: TISA PI SSPO TA ND ATI NO NE ATT HAT (George Thomas).

made up their minds which way to jump. The words 'democracy', 'the United Nations' and 'the rights of man' were used by 'the left' merely as rungs on the ladder to power. Likewise 'elections' which nobody had any real intention of holding were used by both parties. Individuals could change sides but only one party could win. Everyone was an opportunist and there was only one object, the retention or assumption of power. It was politics at its most basic and one disadvantage of the moderate Adenis and the sultans was that they were forced to play the game under British rules and were unable to adopt the Jekyll and Hyde tactics of their opponents. These facts were well understood by the South Arabians. A comprehension of the basic power struggle goes a long way to explaining the apparent contradictions of an obstructiveness of 'the left' and the stubbornness of 'the right' which was to give the British so many headaches and cause many misunderstandings in the days to come.

The first of these apparent contradictions was the unholy alliance between the 'socialist' ATUC and the Imam Ahmad. On the face of it no two parties could be as dissimilar. 'Ahmad the Victorious' as he was known to his subjects inside the Yemen or 'Ahmad the Devil' as soon as they got out, was a medieval despot who made the Protectorate rulers look positively progressive by comparison. Ahmad ruled his country with an iron hand and his solution to most political problems was to lop off a few heads. Not unnaturally for a man in his position he loathed socialists and liberals and particularly disliked the Aden brand whom he held responsible for the assassination of his father in 1948. Conversely he was pleased to subscribe to ATUC funds and help them on the wider political front. For their part the ATUC were only too well aware of the Imam's limitations as a 'socialist hero', yet he was anti-British, a respected member of the Arab community—the Yemen having been accepted as a partner in the United Arab Republic alongside Syria and Egypt, and much of the ATUC's support came from the Yemeni immigrant labour in Aden. And then of course there was always the money. Neither side had any illusions about the other. The Imam brusquely turned down an offer from the ATUC to organise unions in the Yemen. For their part the ATUC were not above plotting behind the Imam's back in the hope that somebody more respectable would emerge. Indeed, for the last two years of the Imam's rule relations between him and the ATUC were decidedly cool. This followed naturally from the Imam's discovery of an Egyptian sponsored plot to replace him with his son.

The second dilemma faced by the ATUC in the fifties and early sixties was the question of elections in Aden State. The franchise was particularly narrow, out of a population of around 200,000 only 20,000 or so possessed the right to vote. On the face of it even when allowance is made for the traditional custom followed by most Arab countries of denying women the franchise it was very limited. It had been initially devised by the Adenis in the Legislative Assembly who were fearful of becoming a minority in their own land. The bulk of support for the ATUC came from 80,000 Yemeni

workers who would stay 2 or 3 years in Aden to earn sufficient money to return to their villages and live in reasonable comfort. The ATUC therefore demanded that these workers be enfranchised knowing that the British would never agree because it would mean giving the vote to a group who had virtually no stake in the country and owed their primary allegiance to another government. It was also next to impossible to keep stock of the number of Yemenis in Aden at any one time. Both the ATUC and the conservative Adenis turned down an alternative suggestion that the 60,000 or so Protectorate workers in Aden should have the vote, fearing perhaps that the representatives of the traditional rulers would end up as the Legislative Assembly. The Nationalists were by this time being ably led by Abdullah al Asnag whose cherubic appearance gave little hint of his capacity for rabble rousing or the brilliant political ability which enabled him to remain at the head of the many diverse and quarrelsome elements that made up the ATUC. Asnag put it abroad that the reason for his opposition was that votes were being given to Indians, Somalis and the like but denied to Arabs. He therefore called for a boycott of all the elections so that in 1955 and 1959 only around 50% of the electorate voted and not until Aden's last elections in 1964 was there a reasonable turnout with 76% of the electorate going to the polls. The real reason for the boycotts was that Asnag appreciated that his party could not take the risk of either failure or more important, success; had he been elected there was chance of his being dubbed pro-British and he would have been forced to try to keep his promises to his supporters. This he knew was impossible. Almost certainly the leadership of the ATUC could have passed into other hands.

The other question on which the ATUC displayed considerable ambivalence was the political issue that dominated Aden politics from 1960 onwards: whether or not the Colony should accede to the new Federation.

The nationalists dreaming of Arab unity, advocated unity with the Yemen, yet flung up their hands in horror at the suggestion that Aden should merge with the Protectorates. Many claimed that the rulers were a band of semi-literate pirates, feudal throwbacks from the Middle Ages and British stooges to boot. The doubts of the ATUC were also shared by many of the Adeni old guard and merchant community. They had learnt from childhood of the tribal bogeyman who lived in anarchy in the not too distant mountains. Very few even dared to venture into the Protectorates to find out the truth for themselves and those who did were rarely reassured. In short, all Adenis of all shades of political opinion were terrified lest closer contact with their brothers in the Protectorate meant the loss not only of their freedom but their household goods as well.

The ATUC emerged from comparative shadow in 1961 to conduct a well organised campaign against the merger. Following the example of other colonial liberation movements elsewhere they sought sympathy in the House of Commons and those sections of the British press where it was most likely to be found. They cultivated lobbies of supporters in those

places who could be relied upon to harass the British government and influence British public opinion. To the Labour Party in particular they presented themselves as honest trades unionists, fellow socialists who would only be too happy to talk reason if only those stubborn officials in Aden would condescend to get down to their level. They were quick to take advantage of the fact that many people whose geography was none too hot understood 'Aden' to be synonymous with the rest of South Arabia. Asnag could claim with justification that he had support in Aden even if it was chiefly based on immigrant labour and was careful to spread the illusion that his party enjoyed equal support everywhere else. In fact he was almost as ignorant as his audience of the true state of affairs in the Protectorate having not at this time journeyed more than an hour's drive from the border of the Colony. Not a few were convinced. Critics of the proposed merger were legion, but none ever produced a sensible alternative. The absurdity of an independent Aden State within the Commonwealth had died with the Aden Association, and a sight of the map was enough to persuade most that Aden and the Federation could not be separated. In 1962 two Labour Members of Parliament, George Thomson (later Minister of State at the Foreign Office) and Robert Edwards, visited Aden as guests of the ATUC. They made no secret of their sympathies and obviously regarded Asnag as a future Prime Minister. They attended a mass meeting of 6,000 workers. Most of the proceedings were in Arabic and Edwards was seen to enthusiastically applaud the speakers all of whom were anti-British. The visit of the two MPs had a powerful effect on Aden public opinion. The illusion quickly grew up that the Labour Party thoroughly disapproved of the Federal government, and once it obtained power would hand over unilaterally to Asnag and his colleagues.

Shortly after the MP's visit the People's Socialist Party (PSP) was formed, most of its 'Supreme Council' were members of the ATUC. In Aden they were seen as the same but abroad the PSP enabled Asnag to ventilate his views without upsetting genuine socialists who disapproved of union participation in politics.

On the home front the ATUC/PSP were equally active and their campaign consisted mostly of intimidation of Legislative Council members. The British were having difficulty enough in getting the Adenis into agreement with the Federal government that it is a wonder that these tactics were not successful.

Hasan Bayumi had emerged as the leader of the pro-Federal party. He was one of the few Adenis who knew the Protectorates and understood the rivalries and jealousies which separated the various states. He realised that the Protectorate opposition could be divided although he had difficulty in persuading his colleagues of the fact. After nearly a year of talks Aden State eventually came to an agreement with the Federation on the terms of its entry. A conference in London in July 1962 straightened out the details, the most important of which was that Aden State would have four ministers on the Supreme Council to everybody else's one and 24 members to the

Federal Council instead of the usual six. On the 24 September the Legislative Council met and ratified the agreement whilst supporters of the ATUC/PSP waited outside. Asnag was already in jail, having been sentenced to a month's imprisonment two days before for having taken part in illegal processions. Even as they voted events were taking place in North Yemen which changed forever the face of politics in the area. On 26 September 1962 Muhammad al Badr, last of the Imams, who had succeeded his father only eight days before, was driven from his home in an army coup, and the Yemen Arab Republic declared. In Aden enthusiasm for the revolution was immense and in the excitement all else was forgotten. On 18 January 1963 Aden formally acceded to the Federation, an event which passed almost unnoticed.

Chapter III

The Revolutionaries

29 September 1962-31 September 1964

Some may ask, why fight for independence when the British will grant it freely in 1968? Comrades, true independence is not given but taken. For this reason, my brothers in the South, there is no way out of war and armed struggle. For this reason the people must wage armed revolution against the enemy, in which they must pay the highest price in life and blood.

Cairo Radio, 18 January 1965

War, violence and sudden death are no strangers to South Arabia. The diversities of the tribes, a thousand years of isolation from the main streams of civilisation together with the all embracing poverty in a land rich in rock and sand but little else have ensured that chaos and anarchy have been the order rather than the exception. It is the all too brief periods of peace that have been remarkable, momentarily rising above the tangle of bloodshed and treachery before falling back to be swallowed by the sands. From the beginning of time rebellion and civil strife have been a normally accepted feature of South Arabian life. In such a society continually at war within itself it is natural for the disaffected to seek and receive refuge with the enemies of their opponents.

Causes of revolt and feud have always been basically the same: traditional rivalries between the main tribal groups sometimes encouraged from outside, sometimes not, the paucity of land and the hand-to-mouth existence of the people, so that the possession of a well often meant survival to those who fought over it. Lack of land and employment also led to a mercenary tradition,* young men with nothing else to do hiring their spears and later their guns to the highest bidder. Squabbles over leadership within even a small tribe often led to endless trouble with the neighbours joining and taking sides. The 20th century and the coming of the British brought other stimulants for dissension. The impact of modern civilisation on a tribal society sometimes caused resentment where it was least expected. A road could mean the loss of customs dues; a school the loss of a son's labour when the rest of the family were working to gather in the

* The Ba Kazim of Lower Aulaqi and the Hadrami and Mausatta of Upper Yafa' are particularly famous 'mercenary tribes'.

harvest. The rise of Arab nationalism and the invention of the transistor radio reinforced the natural xenophobia of the people. Further, in fighting the British and building a new society they could be sure of applause from a watching world.

On 19 September 1962 the Imam Ahmad confounded his enemies by dying in bed. He was succeeded by his amiable son Muhammad al Badr.* A week later, on the night of 26 September, in Yemen north and south the mould of traditional politics was smashed when Lt. Ali Abdul al Moghoy used the few armoured cars and tanks in the Yemeni army to bombard the Bashour Palace in Sana. The attack was not pressed home and al Badr slipped through the rebel cordon and escaped to the northern tribes. At the critical moment al Moghoy was supported by the newly promoted Chief of Staff, Brigadier Abdullah Sallal.† The Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) was born and Sallal became its first President.

The conspiracies against the Imam had been orchestrated by the Egyptian Chargé d'Affaires Abdul Wahad. In the first week of October the troopship *Star of Sudan* docked at Hodeidah bringing the first Egyptian forces to defend the Republic.

In Aden the nationalists were jubilant. Flags of the new Republic were to be seen everywhere in the streets and on the highly decorated lorries, the main mode of transport to the north, countless pictures of Sallal alongside that of President Nasser were displayed. The bazaars buzzed with talk of Arab unity and revolution. There can be little doubt that if the coup had taken place two days earlier the passage of Aden's merger bill with the Federation would have been impossible.

The ATUC/PSP were ecstatic, local issues were forgotten as they organised truck loads of volunteers to go north and fight for the Republic. Many soon returned disillusioned. Victory for the revolution had not been as complete as was first reported. The Imam, many times reported dead, was alive and fighting back.

There can be no doubt that from the first the Egyptians intended to exploit their position in the Yemen to drive the British from South Arabia. Over the course of the struggle the political positions of Egypt in North Yemen and Britain in the south ran curiously parallel. Both were trying to set up administrations in a country which knew nothing of them. Both aroused the xenophobia of the people. Both had the same political problem of trying to unite the urban intellectual, who spoke a language that was

* According to Yemeni custom, imams named Muhammad are surnamed 'al Badr' meaning 'the full moon' as those named Ahmad are called 'al Shams' meaning 'the sun'. In Muhammad's case the name stuck. In the case of his father it was only used by the most sycophantic.

† Twenty-five years old, Lt Ali Abdul al Moghoy was the instigator of the coup. He had been trained in a military college in Egypt and on his return had formed a revolutionary cell in the armoured corps. Sallal whose own conspiracy was not ready agreed to join the rebels whilst they were shelling the palace on condition he be made president. Overawed by his senior officer al-Moghoy agreed. A few weeks later Sallal sent him with inadequate forces against Royalist tribes in Khawlan and he was killed.

accepted by the outside world, with the tribal leader who represented the real power. For the British, this was reflected in the problem of getting Aden to play its full part in the Federation. For the Egyptians, a frustrating series of Yemeni governments, and as far as South Arabia was concerned marrying al Asnag and his Adenis with their international reputation to the tough tribal rebels who provided the South Arabian revolt with most of its 'commandos'. On their side the Egyptians had ideology in which the mirage of Arab unity and the magnetic appeal of President Nasser played a large part.

Further in the political double standards of the times the Egyptians were assured of vocal international support. They could do no wrong, whereas the British could do no right. Against this ideology the British had the influence and trust built on 125 years of occupation. Over the next four years both the British and the Egyptians were to betray their principles and leave the Yemen, north and south, within a day of each other and in the midst of humiliating defeat.

All this was hidden in the future when the first Egyptian troops arrived in Sana to make the Yemen safe for revolution. Everywhere in the towns they were welcomed and could have been forgiven for presuming their presence was no more than a victory parade. They were very quickly disillusioned. The Imam al Badr had escaped and within a few weeks his tribesmen were inflicting bloody defeats on Egyptian troops as they tried to fan out into the countryside. There was considerable pressure on the British government to recognise the new Republican regime. Many influential people in and out of Whitehall considered that because of her historical position Britain was always compelled to back the traditional regimes in the Middle East against the new order of revolution. Here in the Yemen was a chance to switch over. But it was not to be. Britain had two chief reasons for declining to recognise the Republicans. The British criterion for recognition is not whether the regime has the approval of London but whether, with appearance of permanency, it controls the allegiance of the majority of the inhabitants and the greater part of national territory. In this case neither condition appeared to be met. Furthermore the British were reinforced in their belief when they were approached by Dr Abdul Rahman al Baidani the deputy President who asked for support for a breakaway Shafai state in the southern part of the Yemen, 'free of Egyptians and dissidents.' The United States on the other hand tends to recognise regimes of which it approves and considers will undertake their international obligations. President Kennedy extended recognition to the Republicans in December 1962 on the understanding that the Egyptians would withdraw. Recognition alone had been the object of Egyptian diplomacy and they quite blatantly went back on their part of the deal and reinforced their forces instead. To cover up their error American diplomats tended to exaggerate Republican power whilst the British became partisans of the Royalists. It was not the first time that the interests of the Western allies in the Middle East had clashed. In the event



7 *Yemeni Royalist princes on the march*



8 *Qahtan al Shaabi, leader of the NLF.*

the YAR expelled the US consul in Taiz in June 1967.

The Federal government were bitterly opposed to recognition. Fleet Street and many British diplomats thought that they sided with the Imam because, like themselves, he was a traditional ruler. They cared not a jot who ruled from Sana so long as it was a regime well disposed to the Federation. They argued that by extending recognition to the Republic Britain would be helping Egypt, the Federation's most malevolent enemy, and destroying those who for reasons of their own were fighting them. It has been said that if Britain had recognised the Republic early on then Egypt would not have mounted her campaign of terror and subversion against South Arabia. There is no evidence to support this contention. It was a carrot hung out hopefully by the Egyptians. From as early as November 1962, six weeks after the revolution they were announcing the formation of a 'National Liberation Army.' They had been nibbling at British power since 1954 and their treatment of the Americans suggests that they regarded negotiation and agreements as stages in the struggle which can only end when final victory is achieved.

Amongst the very first to declare himself for the revolution was Qahtan al Shaabi who, at the time, was eking out a meagre existence in Taiz as a pensioner of the Imam. As a reward for his zeal the Egyptians made him head of the 'National Liberation Army' formed out of South Arabians who had flocked north to join the Republican army. Most of these were disillusioned soon after arrival and the Egyptians wasted little time in trying to form them into regular units. 'They were quarrelsome and lazy people given over much to fighting amongst themselves.'*

Cadres of the 'National Liberation Army' were sent to Cairo for military training. A special camp was set up in the old Imam's palace at Salah near Taiz as a headquarters and training depot for the force. The initial object was to set up an army on the lines of the Algerian FLN, an aim which was never to be achieved.

In the meantime the Egyptians looked around for areas to cause trouble in the Protectorates and their eyes soon lit on the Radfan. The Radfan is an extensive and savage tribal region some 50 miles north of Aden straddling the road to Dhala. The country is mountainous with no roads penetrating the narrow valley although some, notably the Wadi Taym, has fertile land capable of exploitation if the factious character of the people would permit it. It is amongst the roughest country in the world to fight over and the people had a tradition of raiding the Dhala road or their neighbours and then returning to their mountain strongholds, which for centuries no enemy had been able to penetrate. Technically the tribes of Radfan owed allegiance to the Amir of Dhala to whom they had all sworn oaths of allegiance. The ruler maintained a naib at Thumair on the Dhala road but the links were thin and the Radfanis would not infrequently try and assert

*Major (later Lt Colonel) Hamuda of the Egyptian Army. (Lodar Dec. 1963)



9 British armour in Radfan. *A sledge-hammer to crack a hard nut.*

their independence. In general there was a mutual understanding that so long as the tribes were left alone they would cause no trouble, and although the opportunities for tribal blackmail on the road occasionally proved irresistible, the contretemps were usually short-lived.

The coming of federation made little difference to their agreeable status quo; but suddenly in 1963 the Paramount Shaikh of the Qutaibis of Radfan came down to Aden and complained that he had been 'oppressed' by the Amir of Dhala by his inclusion in the Federation. This was an unusual and sophisticated grievance coming from a tribal chief and to the surprise and dismay of the High Commission other lesser Radfan shaikhs followed suit. Significantly al Asnag's People's Socialist Party began to publicise their grievances and almost before the High Commission knew what was happening they had a crisis on their hands. The real cause of trouble was Qahtan al Shaabi sitting in the border town of Qataba handing out money and rifles to all with promises of more to come.

On 14 October 1963 the Amir of Dhala's naib in Radfan on a routine tour was ambushed in the Wadi Taym. The Radfan Revolt had begun. A rash of ambushes and mine-laying on the road were soon followed by reports that uniformed rebels calling themselves the 'National Liberation Front' had taken the field. This was the most serious threat to security that the Federation had encountered since the Ahl Bubakhr bin Farid had been chased into the Yemen in 1960. And so in November the Federal forces launched 'Operation Nutcracker' with the limited military aim of clearing the road. The military objectives were quickly and easily achieved but there was no political success to back them up. The muddle started in the Federal government itself. It could not decide whether to release the Radfanis in the Federal forces on leave for the duration of the operations as many of the ministers wished or to keep them on. The Federal Army argued that some were in key posts and were necessary for the success of the plan. In the end a bad compromise was reached whereby the rank and file were allowed to depart and the senior officers continued with their duties. To the deeply suspicious Radfanis it seemed that the latter were traitors whilst the rest received due praise for having refused to fight against their fellow tribesmen. Right from the start the Federal government allowed dissension and lack of confidence to creep into the ranks of the armed forces upon which they relied. Further, the danger in Radfan was not appreciated and no real political effort was made to follow up the military success. It was assumed that having been taught a lesson the tribes would come down to Aden and make their submission as they had under similar circumstances in the past. The effect of the massive distribution of arms and the presence for the first time of agitators from other parts of South Arabia combined with the publicity given to the affair by Radios Cairo and Sana was underestimated in Aden. When the Federal forces withdrew from their positions the Radfanis saw it as a great victory and for the first time all the tribes co-operated in the revolt. By the New Year the situation on the road was worse than before.

9 British armour in Radfan. A sledge-hammer to crack a hard nut.

There were two schools of thought as to how to deal with the problem. The Federal government and most of their British advisers came down on the side of air action with limited ground support, which had proved so successful in the past. Air action they argued was cheap, effective and humane. Planes always overflew target villages an hour before the raid was due to take place, dropping warning leaflets to avoid loss of life. Nevertheless there was considerable international pressure against this sort of action; and the 'hawks' of Middle East Command supported an alternative solution; massive ground action which would crush the rebellion and bring the Radfan to order for once and for all. Air action alone could at best be a temporary solution. The latter view won the day. British troops were sent to support Federal troops in the Radfan and eventually rose to brigade strength.

The Radfan operation lasted from the January of 1964 until May, and from the military angle it was a model of success. The whole area was occupied with the minimum casualties but from every other aspect it was a disaster. The presence of British troops had excited a far greater opposition than would otherwise have been the case. In the event air action had to be used. The population as a whole fled into the Yemen and it was months before they could be induced to return, but the greatest damage of all was done by the publicity.

From the military point of view the prime object of publicity was to increase recruiting. Radfan was a showpiece and so every facility was granted to journalists to go and see things for themselves. Accordingly enormous coverage in the British press was assured and an outbreak which was minimal when compared to the rebellions of 1954 and 1958 was blown up in precisely the way that the propagandists of Cairo wanted: a nationalist rebellion being crushed by British troops in support of their Federal puppets. The publicity reached its height over the so-called 'heads' incident. In April 1964 a patrol of the SAS operating deep in Radfan territory was surrounded and forced to fight its way out, two of the soldiers being killed and their bodies abandoned.

General Cubbon, the British Army Commander, gave a press conference in which he claimed that the heads of the two dead men had been exhibited over the gates of Taiz, the Yemen's second capital—he meant to say Qataba, the border rebel base. Not unsurprisingly the General's statement caused a considerable furore in the United Kingdom and he was asked to provide proof, which he was unable to do, especially as the US consul in Taiz denied the reports. The removal of heads was traditional in Radfan and the headless bodies were later recovered.

Whilst the Radfan venture was a setback to the British and Federal cause as a whole, in the area itself the benefits soon became apparent. Eventually all the tribes except two very minor ones returned and were given considerable development aid with which they soon recouped their losses. Generally for the rest of the emergency the area was quiescent and became a

Federal showpiece of what could be done if they were given the chance.*

In the spring of 1963 the Federal government had its first taste of the United Nations. For some time the PSP, SAL and others had been appearing before the Committee of 24 on Colonisation to complain about 'British injustice in South Arabia'. They had been carefully shepherded along the spacious corridors and into the lobbies by the delegates of Iraq and Egypt, and reports of their allegations and activities were beginning to attract international attention. The Committee on Colonisation was already gaining a well-deserved reputation for cant, prejudice and racialism. As the Federal government were to discover, the only standard to be observed was that protégés and supporters of the British were automatically condemned whilst their enemies and opponents were given an enthusiastic welcome. The Federal government were worried by the reports coming in and believed that they had only to appear before the Committee to put the matter right so they despatched Muhammad Farid, the Oxford educated Minister of Finance, to present the Federal case. When he arrived in New York he found that two other petitioners from South Arabia had already preceded him. Sayid Hasan Sohbi, an articulate Aden lawyer, spoke on the behalf of the PSP, condemned the Federal government, condemned British colonialism and demanded union with Yemen. He was followed by the rhetorical Shaikhan al Habshi for the South Arabian League who agreed with everything that Sohbi had said except he rejected union with the Yemen and sought the unity of the whole of British South Arabia into one state, the process being carried out under the guidance of SAL. Although the policies of the two speakers were contradictory, the Committee felt they were on the right lines and both received a sympathetic hearing. Muhammad Farid, on the other hand, had a cool reception. He gave a concise resumé of the Federal case but his words fell on deaf ears. The Committee appeared to be more interested in kicking the British than listening to facts. As soon as he had finished the Cambodian delegate read a long denunciation of the British and their presence in South Arabia. True to form the Committee later passed resolutions both anti-British and anti-Federal in content. These were due to be placed before the General Assembly in December.

December was also the month earmarked for the next South Arabian Constitutional conference in London with the object of setting a date for independence and bringing Aden, whose status was still that of a colony, into line with the other members of the Federation. In London and New York, South Arabia would be in the news, a fact which did not go unnoticed by the Egyptians, the PSP and other opponents of the British Federation. Clearly something dramatic should happen in South Arabia to prove to the

*The wide publicity given by British newspapers to the Radfan did not always improve the geography of their readers. A secretary working for the High Commission in Aden Colony at this time received the following letter from her aunt: 'Dear R. What terrible news from Aden. I do hope you don't have to drive through Radfan on your way to work.'

world the people's rejection of British colonialism. The Egyptian forces now sitting along the Yemeni borders were already playing the Imam's old game of stirring up the tribes, but something more spectacular was needed. Therefore the Aden High Commission were not surprised when a few days before the delegations were due to leave for London the Forces' Union came out on strike over some minor matter. This was of course in defiance of the industrial ordinance and the ATUC expected the leaders to be arrested, giving them the excuse to call a general strike and provide an opportunity for ample publicity regarding British oppression of honest trades unions. For once the authorities took firm action. Most of the strikers were Yemenis and as such illegal immigrants. A batch was promptly rounded up and deported. The strike broke down and Asnag found himself surrounded by Yemenis complaining about the deportations for which they held him responsible. There were to be no dramatic trials but the trades unionist had another card up his sleeve.

At about 8 o'clock on the evening of 9 December 1963 a group of men gathered on the Khormaksar beach just to the east of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was to be a fateful meeting. Amongst those present were Abdullah al Asnag, two of his closest henchmen, Muhammad Salim Basindwah and Mahmud Saddiq, Muhammad Ali Abdu a leading member of the PSP who had once coined the phrase 'TB germs' to describe the Federal ministers, Muhammad Mia a clerk in Aden Airways and Khalifa Abdullah Hasan Khalifa a supervisor in Aden Airways, a leading member of the PSP and fanatically anti-British. They were discussing nothing less than the proposed assassination of the High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, and of the Sharif of Baihan who was regarded as the most dangerous of the Federal ministers. The killing was to be carried out by Khalifa, assisted by Mia. Khalifa at first proposed he should use a machine gun. As an official of Aden Airways his presence on the tarmac would be unremarked. He suggested that he should hide the gun in his trouser leg and approach the party as they were about to board the London bound plane. He would then pull out his gun and empty the magazine into the closely packed group at close range, killing as many as possible. Asnag vetoed the plan on the grounds that Khalifa would be caught red-handed and PSP/ATUC involvement would be impossible to deny.

He wanted to call the whole thing off but was at last persuaded that a grenade would fulfil his conditions for anonymity. The meeting broke up with Khalifa going off with Basindwah to collect a grenade.

For some time the High Commissioner had been engaged in conversation with Asnag in the hope of persuading him to abandon his apparent policy of destruction. Most of these conversations took place on the telephone. According to Sir Kennedy he would ring up the trades union leader at around eight in the morning. Invariably the telephone would be answered by Asnag's mother, her son still lying abed. Consequently when Sir Kennedy rang at seven before departure to the airport and the mother

answered, he was surprised to hear that he was not only up but had already been out on business and indeed had only just returned to the house. When Asnag spoke Sir Kennedy thought he sounded a little flustered and expected that a demonstration condemning the conference had been arranged. However, on arrival at the airport he was reassured; there was nothing. Everything looked peaceful and normal. Most of the delegates were already waiting on the tarmac together with a host of well wishers and journalists gathered to see them off. The spectators' gallery which overlooks the tarmac had its usual collection of onlookers; a couple of bored officials shepherded passengers out to the plane for Djibouti, a sprinkling of Somalis and Indians briefly mixing with the Arab ministers and British officials awaiting their turn. It was a colourful scene and one which Khalifa, looking down on it from the flight observation room, was well used to. He had already been in position for five minutes and shielded by Mia from the only other occupant of the room, a man called Qashbari, had made his way to the window hiding the grenade under his hat which he had placed on the ledge. Moments later something was seen to fall from the window followed immediately by a deafening explosion as the grenade went off. For some minutes all was pandemonium. The splinters had cut a wide swathe through the crowd on the terrace. Some not realising that they had been hit themselves turned to help others who had fallen on the ground. In the middle of it all stood the Sharif of Baihan blood trickling down his face brandishing an enormous revolver and looking for somebody to shoot. Yet despite the apparent carnage the grenade had missed its main target. Sir Kennedy had been jerked out of the way by his deputy George Henderson and escaped with scratches. Henderson was unlucky and received a splinter in the liver. He died a fortnight later in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The only other fatality was an Indian woman transiting through Aden en route for Addis Ababa with her husband and three children. She had never been to Aden before and was the first of many innocent people to be killed in the strife which followed over the next four years.

The grenade injured over fifty others, none seriously, but the psychological scar remained. The conference was postponed. The Federal government proclaimed a state of emergency and Sir Kennedy followed suit in Aden. Under its terms a man could be detained without trial if the authorities had reason to suspect his implication in terrorism. The authorities immediately took the opportunity to round up known troublemakers including Asnag and all the principal participants in the airport bomb plot and ship them off to prison in the Protectorates. There was to be no more serious terrorism in the Colony for nearly two years.

Khalifa and Mia were arrested on the afternoon following the explosion. Nobody had told Asnag about the grenade lever which springs off as the bomb is detonated. In this case the lever was found on the airport roof and by the simple expediency of throwing a dummy grenade and watching where the lever landed the authorities concluded the only place from

which the bomb could have been thrown was the flight observation room. The rest was easy. It was soon found that Khalifa who had no business in the office had been there when the bomb was thrown. Qashbari's evidence clinched it and Khalifa was charged with murder. Everything seemed set for a trial but it never took place. Incredibly Qashbari was allowed to go home. He was got at and fled to Cairo. The only people who seemed surprised were the Aden Police. The trial proceedings were suspended and Khalifa was immediately rearrested and detained under the State of Emergency.

If the Aden and Federal authorities were satisfied with their actions others were not. From Damascus to Moscow, Cairo to the United Nations, a chorus of protests arose condemning the State of Emergency, and demanding the release of Asnag and his colleagues.

More important, a posse of Labour Members of Parliament descended on South Arabia. They made it quite clear that they had not come to sympathise with those injured by the bomb but to bring succour to those detained after it. The confidence of the Federal government was badly shaken by the actions of the MPs which gave added credence to the belief that the Labour government would sell them out to Asnag and President Nasser. From this date began a macabre interest in British bye-election results which would continue almost until independence. That the MPs were sincere and that they thought they were putting wrongs to right there can be no doubt, but it is also undeniable that their actions constituted a grave disservice to Britain and to South Arabia as well as those democratic principles which they claimed to care so much about.

The protests were successful. All those detained were released in the next months. Nearly everyone subsequently took an active part in the terrorism.

Events in Radfan reinforced by the Aden airport bomb and the subsequent declaration of the State of Emergency encouraged the Egyptians to continue with their plans to start trouble elsewhere. Sometime in the spring of 1963 they had finally decided on an all-out offensive on the British in South Arabia. In November a party of Egyptian Intelligence officers had arrived in Taiz to set up rebel bases on the frontiers and enlarge the National Liberation Army. With Radfan going well they decided to reactivate the Imam's old base at Baidha which, with its sultan released from prison by the revolution, was not unnaturally staunchly pro-Republican.

On 1 December 1963 eleven Egyptian officers boarded an Illyushin transport plane at Taiz and headed for the town ninety miles away to the east. Unfortunately the pilot had never flown the route before and navigation was not his strong point. Seeing an airfield through a gap in the clouds he brought the plane down into a perfect three-point landing right beside the Federal Army camp in Lodar, thirty miles due south and 2,000 feet lower than his destination. Immediately realising his mistake the pilot re-revved his engines but it was too late. A British Army captain raced his

landrover onto the strip and blocked the take-off. The Egyptians came out of the aircraft in some embarrassment, the pilot pausing only to smash the controls. They stayed in Lodar for three days making conversation with the Naib and politely side-stepping gentle questioning by the astounded British.

After some courtesies on each side, the Egyptians led by a suave and charming major called Hamuda were repatriated. The aircraft, however, stayed. It was repaired by the RAF and parked on Khormaksar airfield where in the spring of 1967 it was still causing the Egyptian government enough embarrassment for plans to be hatched to blow it up.*

Down in the steamy nationalist circles of Aden the People's Socialist Party had not been able to make all the capital it wished out of the Radfan. This was presumably because most of the leaders, including al Asnag, were in detention following the airport bomb when the operation was at its height. A campaign to raise money for the 'Radfan Martyrs' gained little support as the Adenis were becoming chary of contributing to the PSP's frequent appeals. Rumours of embezzlement seemed to be supported by the apparent affluence of many union leaders. Asnag was finding it increasingly difficult to remain at the head of the trades union movement. The man who preached democracy in London was reluctant to practise it in Aden. Elections within the unions and the Trades Union Congress were overdue and there was every indication that were they to be held Asnag and his supporters would have been thrown out. A second generation of unionists eager for the known prestige and money which office would give them were on their way up. For the next year Asnag, increasingly concerned with maintaining his position, found little time to provide co-ordinated opposition to the British and the Federation. The PSP collapsed soon after Asnag's release from detention, like its predecessor the United National Front the main cause of dissension amongst its members seemed to be money.

The discontented unionists began to find political expression in another organisation. 'The Free Officers of the South' occupied a wooden shack in the depths of Crater; it was a qat chewing club whose founder members were an uninspiring bunch drawn mainly from the criminal fringe. Sometime in early 1963 the club underwent a dramatic change. The drunks and addicts moved out and a dozen or so earnest young men, some of whom were minor union leaders, others officials struggling for a place in the sun on the Asnag dominated ATUC. Under the leadership of Abdul Malik Ismail of the Petroleum Workers' Union they affiliated themselves to the Arab Nationalist Movement and the party of George Habbash in Beirut.

*The aircraft was held by the British in exchange for some British army vehicles lost some two months before. A party of service men and women mainly clerks from Middle East Command went off on a weekend's adventure training, inadvertently straying across the Yemeni border at night. The Yemenis believing that they were being invaded shot up the convoy, killing two. Some of the servicemen were taken to Taiz and eventually repatriated but the vehicles were held.

This group soon joined a Nasserist cell made up of ex-Aden College students led by a schoolteacher Muhammad Ali Haithem and with other support from the Badhib brothers who were well known as Aden's only avowed Marxists.

In the autumn of 1963 Zaki Fraij, a young Jordanian insurance salesman arrived in Aden with the purpose of indoctrinating the Aden branch in the principles of Arab nationalism. In the meantime the group had been in touch with Qahtan al Shaabi in the Yemen, probably through his nephew Faisal who was employed in the Aden Co-operative market. Al Shaabi had been under pressure from the Egyptians to start terrorism in Aden Colony. He was hampered by a personal dislike of al Asnag which may have gone back to his South Arabian League days. In any case al Asnag was still recovering from his detention, grappling with his own political problems and in no position to organise a terror campaign. Al Shaabi first relied on the odd tribesmen to come down to Aden, throw a bomb and disappear. This was hardly satisfactory and the emergence of a fully formed cell with strong union connections must have been a godsend. Messages passed to and fro between his cell and Yemen. The Arab Nationalist Party disappeared, went underground and began to call itself the 'National Liberation Front'. Arrangements were made for the passage of arms* when suddenly the whole group was betrayed and arrested.

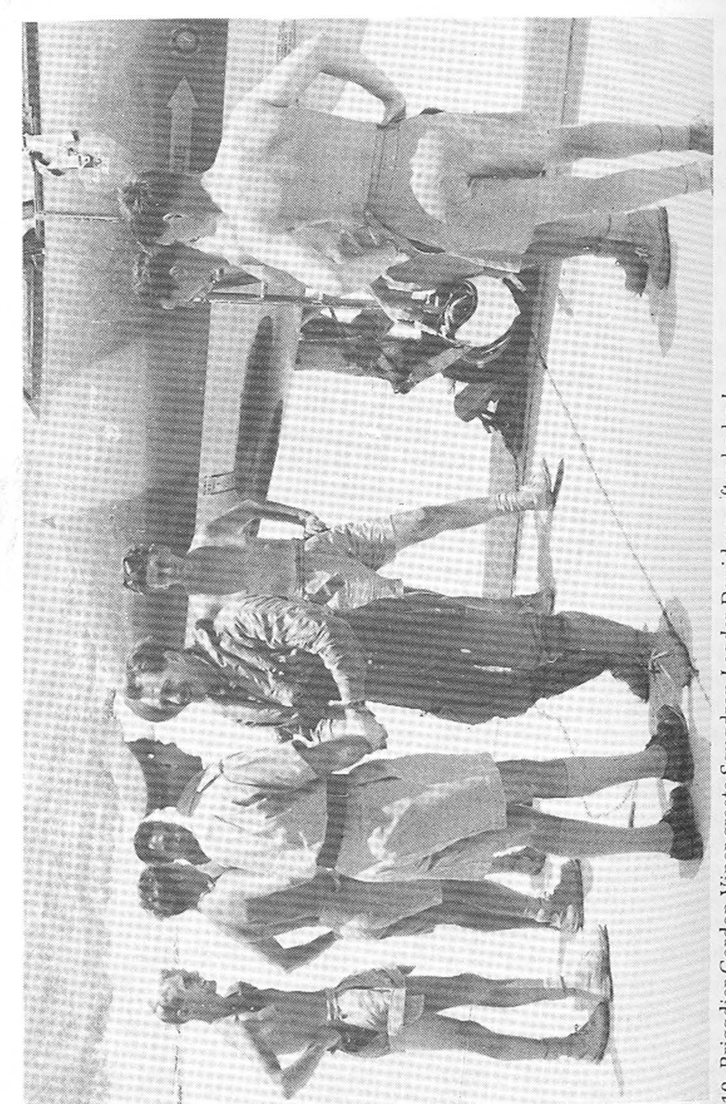
Somehow the Aden Special Branch had got onto Zaki Fraij and as a result of papers found in his possession most of his colleagues, including Abdul Malik Ismail, found themselves in prison. From the authority's point of view it is perhaps unfortunate that they pounced a little too early. As there was nothing concrete to connect their prisoners with terrorist activity they were released, Abdul Malik Ismail promptly leaving for Cairo, Fraij repatriated to Jordan but murdered a year later. According to the Aden NLF this was because they believed that he had betrayed them to the British. The arrest and subsequent release of the NLF leaders gave them increased prestige which enabled the movement to penetrate many of the sports clubs as well as the unions. These sports clubs were especially useful in recruiting terrorists as they provided a pool of the young and idealistic more easily persuaded to risk their lives than their elders. In the final weeks of 1964 they were ready once more to mount an offensive against the British and their allies in Aden Colony.

In the meantime the Federal government had been grappling with the problem of its constitutional evolvement, particularly its relationship with Aden Colony. The conference due to take place in December 1963 had been postponed because of the airport bomb and it was not until the following June that the delegates gathered in London. The purpose of the conference was to agree on a date for independence which brought into focus the

* It may be that some of these arrived and the Aden branch of the NLF were responsible for a number of grenade incidents which occurred in Little Aden during the summer and autumn of 1964.

whole question of British sovereignty in Aden and the Colony's relationship with the rest of the Federation. Circumstances had changed since the conference had been planned eighteen months before. Following the airport bomb the British were no longer agreeable to handing over the internal security of the Colony, so putting it on a par with the other states. The leadership of the Adenis had changed. Hasan Bayumi had died suddenly of a heart attack and had been replaced by Zain Bahroon. The latter was a merchant who had travelled extensively in the Middle East. Affable but prickly he was liable to retire into long silences behind a pair of dark glasses, and although pro-Federal by instinct he knew little about the country outside Aden and consequently there was little communication between him and the Federal ministers which led to many misunderstandings. The delay in holding the conference had also seriously weakened the position of the Aden government. The life of the Legislative Assembly like that of the Conservative government in Britain was drawing to a close. Elections already twice postponed were due to be held the following October and like politicians elsewhere the Adenis found the temptation of playing to their electoral gallery back home irresistible. They could best do this by raking over all the old ground covered in the 1962 Conference which had settled the conditions for Aden's entry. Federations in general were unpopular in Britain at the time and the South Arabian one was suffering from skilful lobbying by Asnag, the publicity engendered by Radfan and the 'Harib Affair'.

In the spring when the Radfan campaign was at its height the Egyptians in the Yemen had won what was to be their greatest victory of the war. Smashing through the Royalist-held mountain massif of al Jauf in Central Yemen they broke out in the eastern plain capturing the two towns of Marib and Harib, sealing off the border with South Arabia. During the operation a Yemeni Republican force had occupied the border village of Dar al bu Tuhaif. The village was in disputed territory and despite pleas from the Sharif of Baihan the British were understandably reluctant to drive the occupying forces out for him. Egyptian air attacks on Baihan villages soon followed, including one napalm stack in the Wadi Ayn on 13 March 1964. The Sharif demanded protection under the terms of Britain's Defence Treaty with the Federation. The British prevaricated. The only possible defence against attacks of this kind was retaliation, an act which would be considered far less sympathetically in the United Nations and elsewhere than the Egyptian attacks which provoked them. The Federal ministers felt that in supporting Britain they had become the target of widespread criticism and both individually and collectively they had been threatened with death because of it. Now they were the undeniable victims of outright aggression and Britain did nothing. They had the right to expect Britain to honour her undertakings even if it caused some embarrassment in Whitehall. To London contemplating the broader and more complex picture of international politics this may have seemed a parochial argument but when a few days later a helicopter



10 Brigadier Gordon Viner greets Squadron Leader Davidson after he had successfully landed his Hunter on the make-shift airstrip at Baihan established to improve Federal defences after Egyptian air attacks.

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blatantly machine gunned the Federal Guard fort at Jebel Bulaiq well inside Baihan territory, they could delay no longer. Hunter jets attacked and demolished the Republican fort a few miles south of Harib. The warning leaflets were read but for some reason not acted upon and over a dozen Republican soldiers killed. The local purpose was achieved. There was to be only one more Egyptian air attack, on Baihan in July 1966. President Nasser made a dramatic appearance in Sana and swore to avenge Harib. Yemenis living in Shaikh Uthman suburb of Aden packed their bags and moved out of the town expecting it to be flattened by the avenging Egyptian air force, but nothing happened. The United Nations made the expected noises. Ignoring the Egyptian attacks they deplored the reprisal. In the academic corridors of the Foreign Office there were rumours never acted upon of resignations and a significant section of the British press were highly critical of the action. Was it not enough for British lives to be lost in Radfan than to compound the mistake by jeopardising British policies abroad in support of such questionable allies?

So when on the opening of the conference in its public first session Bahroon kicked off with an unexpected speech strongly critical of the Federation which he described as having been 'born paralysed' he received a sympathetic press. This, together with advice from Aden to stage a dramatic walk-out if 'Aden's rights' were not granted *in toto*, and dire threats from Cairo about the fate in store for 'traitors to Arabism', encouraged the Adenis to be at their difficult worst. Nevertheless after a month's hard and patient negotiations islands of understanding were reached and agreement arrived at.

The agreement was not spectacular but laid the foundations for future development. It was agreed that the British government should convene a conference for the purpose of fixing a date for independence not later than 1968 and of concluding a defence agreement under which Britain would retain her military base in Aden. With regard to the surrender of sovereignty in Aden Colony it was agreed that 'as soon as practicable after the forthcoming election in Aden the British government would convene a meeting of representatives of Aden and the states of the Federation to agree arrangements for the transfer of sovereignty.' There was also agreement on the future constitutional shape of the Federation and elections.

A few hours before the agreement was signed a bombshell hit the conference: Sultan Ahmad bin Abdullah, the Ruler of Fadhli, founder member of the Federation and its Minister of Information, defected to Cairo. The reasons for the defection can only be guessed at and are as complex as the character of Ahmad himself. A man of great energy he had been one of the driving forces in the Federation, and the subject of some of the most bitter diatribes from Cairo Radio. He had been injured by the airport bomb, and on return to his state had revived an old Fadhli claim to Khormaksar. When next he travelled by air he created a sensation by arriving at the airport surrounded by tribal guards. The release of Asnag

and his followers whom he felt to be responsible for his wounds, the attitude of the British press, the Labour MPs who had visited his state and the apparent reluctance of the British government to honour its commitments to the Federation convinced him that he would be left in the lurch. The Sultan was also subject to more private pressures. He had recently married Kamila, the beautiful daughter of Ali Ismail Turki, an influential Aden hotelier, and she in turn was influenced by her brother Ismail studying in London and a prominent member of the PSP-dominated South Arabian Students' Organisation. It was Ismail who arranged the Sultan's flight to London airport and then to Cairo where he was received, not as a feudal despot, but a nationalist hero. In Fadhli the *dola* were 'persuaded' to depose Ahmad and appoint his brother Nasir ruler in his stead.

The excitement of Ahmad's defection had barely died down when campaigning for the Aden State elections got underway. The election was fought on a narrow franchise, only Aden-born males having the right to take part. This pleased neither the Federal government who considered that its narrowness encouraged separatist tendencies in Aden and excluded their own nominees, nor the militant opposition who wanted to include the Yemeni immigrant labour. As usual Asnag called for a boycott but it was an utter failure. His People's Socialist Party had already broken apart at the seams and some ignoring their leader's plans offered themselves as candidates. These included Fuad Barahim the lawyer and 'Grenadier' Khalifa still held in detention following the airport bomb. Sixteen seats were contested and after the election six more members would be nominated by the High Commissioner. The principles of democracy were not strictly adhered to and votes were quite blatantly put up for sale and bid for by most of the 43 candidates who evidently considered it to be worth a great deal of money to secure a seat in the Assembly. The Khudabux Khan brothers Hasan and Hussain had brought this kind of electioneering to a fine art, transforming their constituencies of Crater North and South into rotten boroughs. They were immensely wealthy having made their money from property interests as well as more doubtful activities. Although they usually took a militant line (Asnag was later to marry Nadhira, daughter of Hussain), they were heartily detested by most sections of the community. Nothing loath they entered the elections with enthusiasm and secured votes by the simple expediency of inviting a potential voter to swear on the Qur'*an* to support their candidature, then cutting the required number of notes in two they would give one half to the voter and tell him to return and collect the rest when the brothers were elected. Owing to the complications of the electoral system the voters in Crater North were entitled to send three members to the Assembly. It was in this constituency that Abdul Qawi Mackawee supported by Besse, the powerful shipping firm of whom he was a director, stood alongside 'Grenadier' Khalifa. For Khalifa it was his own backyard and he was supported by the vast Khalifa clan which campaigned on his behalf. Every voter having three choices insured his

success. They would not have been human if many had not been taken with the romantic lure of voting for the detained local boy and taking a swipe at authority at no cost to themselves.

Despite the boycott there was a 76% turnout and no incidents. Most of the old stalwarts were returned. Khalifa gained over 1,000 votes and came top of the poll. Bahroon, Husain Bayumi brother of the late Hasan, Ali Luqman who had succeeded his father as leader of the People's Congress, Mackawee and needless to say the brothers Khudabux* got in without difficulty. In Little Aden a local pro-Federal fisherman, Salim Ahmad Naiqa, easily defeated his PSP opponent, and in Shaikh Uthman a young airline executive, Hashim Umar, already a secret member of the NLF entered public politics for the first time. Amongst those nominated were Abdul Rahman Girgirah, leader of the United National Party and Sayid Hasan Sohbi, lawyer and one-time member of the PSP. An attempt was made to offer a place to al Asnag but he refused.

Although his boycott had failed al Asnag could take comfort that seven of the new members were sympathetic to his party. The Federal government were also quite pleased, noting that not one of the candidates had demanded the withdrawal of Aden from the Federation. Bahroon formed the new government.

Elections had also taken place in Britain and the Labour Party under the leadership of Harold Wilson had gained a small majority in the House of Commons. Duncan Sandys was replaced as Secretary of State for the Colonial Office by Antony Greenwood who as a gesture of goodwill released Khalifa from detention.

The new Secretary of State, with the disarming simplicity born by long years of exile from office, believed it was more the actions of his predecessors rather than the facts of the case which had caused so many difficulties. He came to office determined to clear up the mess in South Arabia. He had been in contact with Asnag for some time and saw the issue as not one between Egypt and Britain but between Asnag's blue collar socialists and the reactionary Federal rulers. There was no doubt as to where his sympathy lay. He was a leading member of the Committee for Liquidation of Colonialism and a Vice President of the Society for the Abolition of Blood Sports. In many ways a brilliant politician he can be forgiven if the harsh realities of power politics in South Arabia were not his *métier*.

The first change made by the new Labour administration was to retire the High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, who had been the chief architect of federation, and was felt to be too closely identified with the Federal government to give credence to the new look policy which

* Members of the Legislative Assembly were allowed to carry weapons for their personal protection. In the case of Hasan Khudabux this led to personal misfortune. One day his pistol went off as he was putting on his trousers. His secretary telephoned Government House to request the urgent assistance of an army doctor to 'sew on Mr Khudabux's penis'.

Greenwood envisaged. For his part Sir Kennedy frankly expressed his disquiet at the plans shaping in the Minister's mind. The new High Commissioner was Sir Richard Turnbull who had the reputation of being one of the finest administrators in the Colonial Service and had recently retired as High Commissioner in Tanganyika where his tact and diplomacy had ensured a smooth transfer of power to Nyerere. In Sir Richard the Labour government felt they had a man of immense prestige who was sympathetic to nationalist aspirations.

At the end of 1964 Greenwood arrived in South Arabia to see things for himself. He had talks with Federal and Aden ministers as well as independent bodies. His visit reached a climax when the Federal and Aden governments issued a joint statement in favour of a 'unitary sovereign state'. Many Adenis had long sought the development because they believed that the Federal system perpetuated the authority of the rulers. In a unitary state they felt it would be easier for them to attain political power. Not unnaturally the Federal ministers had always opposed the suggestion. The impasse was resolved by the Sharif of Baihan who suspected that the purpose of Greenwood's visit had been to take Aden out of the Federation and seized the concept of the unitary state as a method of preventing this.

The Federal ministers were inadequately briefed on the implications of a unitary state and to some it only seemed to be a mere statement that they were 'united', a condition which along with all other Arabs they always claimed but never achieved. This lack of comprehension was underlined when the proposals came up for formal consideration by the Federal Supreme Council. It was approved in five minutes flat whilst the other item on the agenda, the interminable border dispute between Wahidi and the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom was not resolved in two hours' intense discussion. In a unitary state all state borders are necessarily abolished. Greenwood went ahead with plans for a new conference scheduled to take place in March 1965 to bring the new state into being.

As 1964 drew to a close the Federation was faced with new threats to its security both in the Protectorates and in Aden. The Egyptian Major Hamuda had at last installed himself in Baidha. He was an astute and clever intriguer. Backed by substantial quantities of arms and money he quickly raised the tribal Caliban throughout the central area. Dathina was soon the nightly scene of attacks on Government forts and administrative centres. The usual pattern of minelaying and attacks on livestock and irrigation works was repeated and in August the rebels were strong enough to try and storm Mudia fort in broad daylight. They were beaten off with heavy losses by the Federal Guard and this proved to be a turning point. The lesson of Radfan had been learnt and British troops were not called in. Disheartened by their failure more of the rebels returned to their homes and the hard core to the Yemen.

In Audhali Hamuda's tactics had their most spectacular success. He concentrated on the Naib, the same Jaabil who had so effectively trounced the Imam's agents back in 1958. Jaabil's headquarters, the Audhali town of

Mukairas facing Baidha across the border, came under regular attack from rebel bands who concentrated their efforts on the Naib's house. Hamuda backed up the physical attack by threats on the Naib's family steadily reducing his morale. Soon Hamuda established a dialogue with Jaabil and suggested that it was all a misunderstanding, if a man of Jaabil's standing would only come and speak to President Nasser personally he Hamuda believed that the whole thing would be called off. It worked, the little man fell for it and on 8 November crossed into the Yemen to join the other Federal rebel Ahmad bin Abdullah of Fadhli in exile.

The Federal government was deeply shocked. Jaabil was one of their greatest supporters and was regarded as something of a champion in the fight to maintain control. His defection lowered their morale at the crucial period of Greenwood's visit. In the event Jaabil was to prove more of a liability to the Egyptians than an asset. He realised that he had been tricked. The Egyptians never tried lionising him as they had done Ahmad bin Abdullah. His attempts with the former Fadhli Sultan to raise tribal rebellion were at best half-hearted and in the end both returned to the Federal fold. For Hamuda it was a hollow victory. The Rassas of Baidha were already asserting their traditional dislike of central government from Sana be it Republican or Royalist and were beginning to work it off on the Egyptians' presence. Hamuda himself came under daily attack, a development which was not discouraged by Naib Nasir, who had succeeded Jaabil in Mukairas and Hamuda was soon forced to return to Taiz.

In Aden the NLF carried out their first significant assassination. On 27 December Inspector Khalil of the Aden Special Branch was gunned down in the Crater qat market. The murderers escaped. Hashim Umar, the recently elected member for Shaikh Uthman North in the Legislative Assembly, took a prominent part in the killing.

Such was the position at the close of 1964. The Federation faced an uneasy future. To survive much would depend on the successful outcome of the conference scheduled to take place in the following spring. The Federation would have to arrive at a meaningful agreement with the Adenis and gain a significant measure of independence from the British, including internal security power in Aden as well as obtain full British support against Egypt. The NLF in Aden was still only a tiny minority. The militants were in disarray. Al Asnag was fighting for political survival and al Shaabi was shortly to be packed off to Cairo by the Egyptians exasperated at his penchant for dipping his fingers into the till and his refusal to co-operate with al Asnag. The Radfan operation was as good as over and the rebellion in Dathina defeated. Terror in Aden could be halted if the authorities took decisive measures to combat it. 1965 represented Britain's last chance to bring South Arabia to successful and friendly independence and save her face in Aden. Unhappily for South Arabia and for Britain none of these desired developments took place. The road to ruin is paved with good intentions and the new British government took it with scarce a backward glance.

Chapter IV
Funeral in Aden
1 January 1965-28 February 1967

Myself against my brother. My brother and I against my Father. My family against my uncles. My tribe against the stranger.
Arabian Proverb

The first victim of 1965 was the constitutional conference scheduled to take place in March. Following Anthony Greenwood's visit to South Arabia the Federal ministers had found time to explore the concept of the unitary state to which they had so flippantly committed themselves. What they saw they did not like, and when it became clear that the coming conference was not just another get-together with the Aden government, but that political parties, which presumably meant al Asnag, would be invited to take part on equal terms they prevaricated and raised every kind of difficulty. Briefly the Federal government felt that the gains made under Duncan Sandys had been abandoned, that their own position was being undermined, and that if Asnag wanted to be represented then he should have stood in the Aden elections and accepted the responsibility of government like everybody else. Further, it must be said that they were still deeply suspicious of Greenwood and the Labour government. The Colonial Secretary's previous associations with the PSP and other 'colonial liberation movements' were not forgotten. And any favourable impressions he may have made during his tour of the territory were diluted when it became known that al Asnag had received a Christmas card from the Secretary of State addressed to 'Aden Occupied South Yemen'. It was an error probably made by Greenwood's secretary as she noted down al Asnag's address from a piece of ATUC or PSP notepaper, but in the suspicion-racked world of South Arabia it was an incident given a significance it did not have.

In the course of their manoeuverings the Federal government came not unnaturally into conflict with Bahroon. Insults were exchanged and when Bahroon proposed to issue a strongly worded statement critical of the Federal government, Sir Richard Turnbull banned its broadcast and Bahroon tendered his resignation. The threat of resignation was an accepted part of South Arabian politics and was rarely meant to be taken seriously. It usually came after a rebuff and was offered merely as a means of saving face and obtaining consolation. During the year that he was

Aden's Chief Minister Bahroon must have tendered his resignation on half a dozen occasions and consequently he was much affronted when this time the offer was snapped up. When the news reached London Greenwood postponed his conference to allow a new team to play itself in. At first nobody wanted the job of forming the new government but eventually Abdul Qawi Mackawee allowed himself to be persuaded that he possessed the necessary qualities to face the task ahead. Girgirah and Bahroon who had been much irritated by Mackawee's dog in the manger criticisms of their actions from the safety of the opposition bench, rather maliciously urged him on. Mackawee was a naturally pleasant and affable man, happiest when at home with the wife and children. He was to rue the day that he ever left them. Coming from a leading Adeni family he nevertheless had more than a dash of Indian blood which made him defensive with a tendency to extremism. Mackawee's greatest achievement was that he had been appointed local director of Besse, the Aden Shipping and Trading Company. Although they retired him early the company made a great deal of fuss of Mackawee, perhaps to veil the fact that they had no other Arab director, and gave him help in furthering his political career. Yet despite his commercial success even his closest friends agree that one of the outstanding characteristics of the man was his inability to take a decision or ever hold an opinion of his own, in business or out of it. A few months later when his notoriety as Chief Minister was at its height and after some particularly successful twisting of the lion's tail Mackawee met his closest associates and admirers in the newspaper office of Muhammad Basharahil, who was the influential 'al Ayyam' and until that point had supported him. As he entered those present gave Mackawee a standing ovation. When the applause died down somebody asked the Chief Minister what he planned to do next. With obvious sincerity Mackawee replied, 'I was rather hoping that you would tell me.'

Mackawee took three weeks to form a government, an uncommonly long time by Aden's standards. Even on the day of the swearing-in ceremony there was a most undignified squabble between two of the members, both of whom assumed that he had been promised the valuable portfolio of Lands. The disappointed aspirant had to make do with the lesser distinction of becoming the Minister of *Waqfs* (Religious Endowments) and Tourism. Other members included Hashim Umar as Minister of Civil Aviation, Sayid Hasan Sohbi with a delicate task as Minister of Labour and Welfare, and 'Grenadier' Khalifa who became Minister of Finance. Even the Adenis who had voted him to power were taken aback at the last named. Before his arrest Khalifa's chief claim to fame had been as a local football star. His unpredictability was well known. At one memorable match in the Crater Stadium, booed by the crowd for some foul or other, he retaliated by dropping his pants and exhibiting his own disapproval in startling fashion. His only executive action in seven months as Aden's Minister of Finance seems to have been to order the removal of the Queen's portrait from his office.

Once in the saddle Mackawee soon realised that the task was beyond him. The day to day administration was ignored as the Chief Minister and his colleagues got down to the serious business of baiting the British. The twenty-four Adeni representatives in the Federal Council were withdrawn and the British troops accused of organising terrorism themselves. Terrorism in the Colony was increasing as the NLF gained ground. One month after taking office Mackawee disassociated himself from the curfews imposed by the security authorities and followed this up by demanding an end to the state of emergency and the formation of a provisional government which meant dissolving the existing Federal one. Mackawee soon found the United Nations Resolutions which it will be remembered called for the removal of both the British base and the Federal government. The demand for the implementation of these resolutions became the answer with which he rebuffed any Federal or British initiative to seek a formula along which ordered constitutional development could take place.

Most of Mackawee's government was made up of former members of fellow travellers of the PSP. There is strong evidence to suggest that al Asnag, keeping prudently in the background, influenced many of the decisions. He at least had a policy. In an attempt to answer the challenge of the NLF he had in February merged his now defunct PSP with the South Arabian League and a group of tribal dissidents, the most important of whom were Muhammad Aidrus and ex-Sultan Ahmad bin Abdullah of Fadhi, into the Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS). Asnag's object was to bring about a breakdown of British policy and the 'democratic' form of government in Aden. Having done so he hoped that his influence in the lobbies of Westminster would ensure that he was invited to step in and fill the vacancy. In Mackawee he had found a willing tool.

Sir Richard Turnbull who had been so successful in dealing with nationalists elsewhere made effort after effort to coax the Chief Minister to adopt a more reasonable path. Each succeeding interview seemed to hold out the promise of success but as soon as Mackawee returned to his friends and other opinions his mood changed and he took the line of least resistance by playing to the mob.

In an effort to gain his confidence Greenwood suggested that a two-man constitutional committee should visit South Arabia to advise on what steps should be taken to prepare the territory for independence. This was sailing close to the wind with the Federal government which was demanding a return to the course proposed by the 1964 conference, and only acquiesced after hard lobbying by the High Commissioner. Mackawee promptly rejected the proposal but Greenwood persisted, appointing as members Sir Evelyn Home, a former Chief Secretary of Aden, and a distinguished Sudanese judge. The Sudanese soon withdrew under pressure from Cairo and Mackawee brought off a spectacular coup de grace by declaring Sir Evelyn an illegal immigrant, so preventing his arrival.

This farce had been watched with fascinated attention in South Arabia.

Nobody gave the British, or for that matter, the Federal government any credit for trying to come to a reasonable accord. It was seen as a clear victory for Mackawee and everybody awaited the next round with interest.

Nothing loath, Greenwood hurried out to Aden in an attempt to persuade all parties to gather round the conference table. At first the Federal government insisted on the principle established in London in the previous summer, which confined seats at the conference table to members of the Adeni and Federal governments. It says much for Greenwood's diplomacy and tact that he achieved a compromise and managed to persuade them to sit alongside al Asnag and an OLOS delegation as well as representatives from the three states of the Eastern Aden Protectorates, in a 'working party' which was to draw up an agenda for a future conference, the same conference which had been postponed in the spring.

The 'working party' assembled in London during August and achieved nothing. Asnag and Mackawee remained obdurate in their insistence on the full implementation of the UN Resolutions and, encouraged by Cairo, refused to budge. Perhaps during their talks Greenwood realised for the first time what he was up against and that not all men were as reasonable and gentle in their approach to the problem as he was. Muhammad Salim Basindwah, a member of the OLOS delegation, shocked the delegates by his hysterical outbursts and insults, some directed personally at the Secretary of State. It had long been the wonder of the people of Aden as to why Asnag tolerated his baby-faced henchman with his mincing ways and little to recommend him except an enormous capacity for spite. Like the shark with its attendant pilot fish the two were inseparable although they had the occasional tiff. Two years later, in a fit of temper, Basindwah was to make an unsuccessful attempt to abandon Asnag for the NLF, but in the event they proved to be the most durable duo in Yemeni politics.

The talks had one result in that they convinced Asnag that the British were not so willing to desert the Federal government as he had thought. He had other plans in mind and a few days later arrived in Cairo to take an open part in the direction of terrorism. Mackawee returned to Aden where coincidently terrorism had taken a vicious turn for the worse. On the first day of September Sir Arthur Charles, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, was mortally wounded as he left the Crater tennis courts by the NLF 'commando' Hasan al Zaghir. The murder shocked both the Arab and British communities alike as Sir Arthur was a universally respected figure. He was also a man of habit and his routine of leaving the tennis courts at 6.30 pm gave his assailant the chance he wanted. Routine also played a large part in the downfall of the next victim, Harry Barrie, Deputy Head of the Aden Special Branch. Every Sunday the former Palestine policeman drove to work at 7.15 am and on Sunday 4 September the NLF were waiting for him. They shot him dead as his car stopped at a halt sign. A third killing, that of Bob Waggitt, the Head of Special Branch, was only avoided when the would-be assassin found himself unexpectedly confronted by an enormous British soldier bodyguard who was sitting in

the policeman's lounge pouring himself a beer. Unfortunately for the authorities the soldier had removed the magazines from his sub-machine gun as a safety precaution and before he could refit them the man escaped.

Under Mackawee's leadership the Legislative Assembly formally regretted the murder of their Speaker but intentionally refrained from condemning the killers. The situation had become intolerable and a few days later the long-suffering British government suspended the Aden Constitution, dissolved the Assembly and the High Commissioner assumed direct rule in the Colony.

By any standards this was a retrograde step, but Mackawee's behaviour had made his removal inevitable if any ordered constitutional progress was to be made. Unhappily the timing of the British decision was unfortunate. Ever since the Labour government had come to power one of the ambitions of its foreign policy had been to come to terms with President Nasser. After careful diplomatic overtures it was arranged that George Thompson, now Minister of State at the Foreign Office, should visit Egypt and endeavour to reach agreement on a number of issues including South Arabia. As the Minister arrived in Cairo the BBC announced the removal of Mackawee, an act which the Egyptians not unnaturally construed as an intended slight. Thompson never even saw the President. He went back to London empty handed whilst the Egyptians exploited another propaganda victory at the expense of the British.

It is inconceivable that the British Cabinet were not aware of either the decision to remove Mackawee or Thompson's mission. The Mackawee government had lasted for nearly seven months* and a few more days would not have mattered. If Thompson had managed to bring off a deal with the Egyptians then Mackawee would have been brought to order and his dismissal unnecessary. If he had failed then the dismissal could have gone ahead as a sign that the British meant business. As it was, Thompson had no chance of success and suffered an unnecessary humiliation.

Shortly after his dismissal Mackawee fled to Cairo where he joined al Asnag. No demonstrators had come into the streets to protest against his downfall, in fact most Adenis seemed relieved that the pantomime had at last been brought to a halt. The whole thing took place with the minimum of fuss. The only painful incident occurred when one of the Mackawee ministers, listening to Sir Richard Turnbull reading the instrument of dismissal, had a fit and had to be carried screaming out of the conference room.

The Federal government was reassured. They saw the removal of Mackawee as a sign that Britain intended to go back to the 1964 charter. Direct British rule in Aden would not be expected to last for long and seemed at the time to be a first step towards handing over sovereignty to the Federation. In London the Earl of Longford replaced Antony Greenwood as Colonial Secretary.

* 8 March-25 September

Taking advantage of the breathing space, the Federal government took a long hard look at its constitution. In August it had obtained the services of Sir Ralph Hone and Sir Gawain Bell to 'consider and recommend suitable amendments to the constitution . . . as a result of consultation with all major interests in South Arabia, to prove acceptable as far as possible to their interest and satisfy aspirations.'

As Hone and Bell settled down to their task Lord Beswick, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies, visited South Arabia, for which he had assumed responsibility, and took the opportunity to repeat that it was Britain's aim to establish a United Republic which included the three eastern states by 1968. He also had another mission. The British had decided to remove their military base from Aden and Beswick was to probe possible Federal reactions to the decision. In fact the Federal government did not so much mind the removal of the base: which would be a political liability and detract from their independence. What they did not realise was that Britain also intended to rule out any notion of a defence treaty yet, at the same time, hang on until a 'broad based' government was established. In short from the British side the 1964 agreement was forgotten. Beswick misunderstood the Federal reaction just as they misunderstood the true nature of his mission. If this had been appreciated then there can be no doubt that the Federal ministers would have raised hell even before the Minister had returned to London at the end of his first visit, and before the public announcement was made.

The implications of the British Defence Review February 1966 have been discussed elsewhere, but suffice it to say that the announcement came at a moment when the militants were in disarray and the fortunes of their Egyptian sponsors at their lowest ebb.

In March 1965 the Royalists in the Yemen had recaptured Harib and beaten off a counter-attack by strong Egyptian and Republican forces. Throughout the summer the Royalist offensive gained momentum. One by one Egyptian-held towns in Eastern and Central Yemen fell to the tribesmen. 15,000 Egyptian troops surrounded in the Jauf by the Amir Muhammed bin Hussain were allowed to march out only after they had surrendered all their stores and heavy weapons. Other smaller Egyptian garrisons were cut off and in June the Royalists had captured the strategic Sirwa Pass and were threatening Sana. The Egyptians could draw little comfort from the performance of the Republican government. The enthusiasm which followed the revolution had quickly passed away and the factions within the Republic multiplied, turning it into a political ant-heap. Basically they were divided into those who wished to come to an accommodation with the Royalists and those fervent Republicans, including some whose deeds had placed them beyond the reach of reconciliation, who would accept nothing less than the complete removal of the Imamate and exile of the Royal family, the Hamid al din. The Egyptians had long supported the second party led by President Sallal and his Prime Minister Hassan al Amri. The conciliators were initially

led by the venerable Qadhi Zubairi who was murdered in obscure circumstances in the spring of 1965.*

Faced with military disaster the Egyptians removed al Amri, shipped Sallal off to Cairo for a year's exile, and appointed as Prime Minister Ahmad Muhammad Numan who had been Zubairi's deputy. In June President Nasser made a dramatic trip to Jedda to meet King Faisal where the two leaders reached agreement for an immediate cease fire in the Yemen, the withdrawal of Egyptian troops, and arranged for peace talks to be held between the two sides in the Northern Yemeni village of Haradh.

The talks began in November and dragged on without sign of agreement before breaking up for Ramadhan. The visit of Lord Beswick to Aden and the announcement of British withdrawal came soon afterwards. President Nasser let out a cry of joy, proclaimed his intention of staying in the Yemen 'to liberate South Arabia' and reversed his plans to withdraw. The Yemeni war once again spluttered into life.

When Mackawee joined Asnag in Cairo as a leader of OLOS the Egyptians put into action their plans for uniting the organisations with the NLF so creating one revolutionary body. They realised that the NLF were the more effective terrorists but at the higher political level they had nobody possessing the international reputation of either Asnag or Mackawee.

Qahtan al Shaabi had been removed from the scene of operations. He had proved expensive, quarrelsome, and did not have the tribal standing to obtain the co-operation of fellow rebels such as Muhammad Aidrus or the ex-Sultan of Fadhli. Al Shaabi was first installed over the Reuters Office in Cairo. Journalists tell how he got into the habit of asking if any news had come over the ticker and if the answer was in the negative he would potter back upstairs, write a communique and a few minutes later deliver it as news from the front. In the end the exile proved the salvation of al Shaabi. His followers forgot their leader's defects and the passing of time built him up into a legendary figure in the imagination of the people.

With al Shaabi safely out of the way living on an Egyptian pension the Egyptians proposed that OLOS should merge with the NLF to form a single organisation, the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY),† as a first move towards forming a 'government in exile'. The suggestion met with a mixed reception. Many of the NLF leaders agreed, those who had

*The murder took place at Barat tribal centre of the Dhu Muhammad in Northern Yemen. Both Republicans and Royalists accused each other of the killing. Three tribesmen confessed in an interview with an Egyptian magazine to have carried out the deed on Royalist instructions. They were later reported to have escaped from a Republican prison.

The Royalists maintain the killing was arranged by Abdullah Guzailan, later Deputy President and then head of Republican Intelligence on the orders of the Egyptians who feared Zubairi's growing campaign for peace. Guzailan hailed from Barat.

†The speedy dissemination of the English abbreviation FLOSY for the Arabic *Jubha Arabiya li tahrir janob al Yemen al muhtal* gave the organisation a vaguely ridiculous taint at the outset and was one of the subtler strokes of Federal propaganda. The sponsors preferred to be known as 'The Liberators'.

connections with the trades union movement in Aden being the most significant exceptions. Amongst the rank and file—especially those who had taken part in terrorist or guerilla attacks—there was general feeling that they were being taken over by Adenis who had sat on their backsides whilst others were risking their lives in 'the struggle for independence'. In addition. Mackawee was openly accused of being 'a capitalist' and receiving a British salary. Indeed until mid-1967 his eldest daughter remained at school in Britain on a Federal government scholarship.

Opposition to the merger was well known to the principals who kept the matter quiet until the last moment.

The announcement was made in Taiz on 19 January 1966 during a dinner at the Republican Palace in honour of President Sallal who had just returned from Cairo and consented to grace proceedings with his revolutionary presence. Mackawee and Asnag spoke for OLOS and Ali Ahmad Sallami for the NLF. The speeches were not without interruption from some NLF members who thought that they had been invited along for a free meal and had no inkling of what was in the wind. The most raucous of these were removed by the guards. Further interruptions were caused by the frequent failure of the electricity which at the best of times only produced a dull glow.

Before long the Yemeni President had had enough and went off to bed. In the morning the merchant who held the electricity concession was thrown into jail.

If the Egyptians had thought that by forming FLOSY they put an end to union rivalry in Aden they did not have to wait long to realise their mistake. The pro-NLF unionists in Aden were incensed by the merger which they felt to be a betrayal. Where Asnag was once undisputed king he was at first disliked and then hated. The unions opposed to the Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) had been careful to avoid an open clash. The frustration produced by the formation of FLOSY to which as NLF sympathisers they nominally owed allegiance enabled extremists to expoit the situation. Ali Hussain Qadhi, the ATUC President and the most able of Asnag's lieutenants in Aden, was their first target. He was shot dead as he answered the door of his Maalla house barely three weeks after the emergence of FLOSY.

The murder created a sensation in Aden. The pistol which had been dropped at the scene of the crime was soon traced to Anwar Khalid, a Federal agricultural officer, who subsequently turned out to be an important figure in the NLF. He had obtained the weapon on loan from the British Under Secretary to his Ministry. In turn he passed it on to Abdul Fatah Ismail a schoolmaster who had taken part in the murder of Barrie in the previous autumn with instructions to carry out the killing. The post of coroner was held by Ashraf Khan a close friend of Asnag. He issued a warrant for the arrest of Anwar Khalid who had fled, but disguised the motives for the crime by accusing British Intelligence of plotting it. As a FLOSY sympathiser it was hardly politic for him to reveal a split in the

organisation so soon after its birth. Retribution was close at hand. Qadhi was a Yemeni from Baidha and his brother a major in the Republican Army. The major made his way to Aden and shot a pro-NLF unionist—the blood feud had arrived. Tension between the rival parties ran high. Then came the announcement of British withdrawal and the implication that they would shortly abandon the Federation to its fate. The militants received a much needed shot in the arm. In the euphoria which followed reconciliation was soon effected. It was a patchy truce at best but it lasted for a vital eight months during which time terrorism increased and the sound of exploding grenades and gunfire became a common occurrence in Aden's streets.

For their part the Federal ministers complained bitterly that 'Britain is leaving them at the mercy of Egyptian aggression and Russian penetration.'* For the next twelve months they continually lobbied the British government in the hope of obtaining a reversal of the decision on the defence treaty. By the time their efforts met with success it was far too late. The Labour government were still chasing the mirage of a compromise with the militants and now that the base was going they prodded the Federal government into accepting the United Nations Resolutions,† only to be told by FLOSY that these were no longer a basis for agreement.

The High Commissioner had the thankless task of trying to persuade Adenis to fill the twenty-four seats on the Federal government. FLOSY threatened to murder any who did. In spite of this five agreed, including Girgirah, Hussain Bayumi, Salim Ahmad Naiq and Muhammad Hassan Obali, who were made Federal Ministers.

Throughout the long hot summer the morale of Federal supporters fell steadily in face of increasing attacks by the Yemen based FLOSY. Then suddenly the Federal government sprang to life. The ministers were anxious to put their draft constitutional amendments as prepared by Hone and Bell to the Federal Council so that they could get on with the job of working out the details. With only negligible Adeni presence in the Federal Council its approval would be politically meaningless, both inside and out of South Arabia. The ministers realised that if they were to rectify this unhappy state of affairs and persuade Adenis to come forward then an answer to FLOSY intimidation would have to be found. The Federal government therefore broadcast a warning to the Yemeni Republicans, threatening that if there was further terrorism in South Arabia and the militants continued to receive shelter on Yemeni soil and continued to have use of Taiz and Sana Radio stations then the border would be closed. If further outrages continued, Yemenis working in Aden would be deported. A grenade exploded—a man was shot and the Federal government good as its words closed the frontier.

* *The Sunday Times*, 12 March 1966.

† 13 May 1966.

This was no empty gesture but a telling blow. Roughly three-fifths of the Yemeni imports came through Aden. Closure of the border meant that the southern half of the country suffered a serious shortage of such basic products as flour and petroleum. The cost of bread in Taiz trebled and a gallon drum of kerosine for stoves went up by 400%, and soft drinks became a luxury that only the rich could afford. Local decrees were introduced to prevent hoarding and the Egyptians were compelled to divert much needed grain ships to Hodeidah. Yemen's only significant export to South Arabia was qat. The price of a bundle shot up in Aden as lorry loads of the stuff queued up on the other side of the border. The Yemeni riyal whose only real exchange market was Aden Suq fluctuated wildly, dropping from around 6 to between 2-3 shillings. It never recovered. Nor did the closure do much direct harm to Adeni merchants. Most of the Yemen trade was in the hands of Yemenis who had opened offices in Aden to run it. Their voices joined the chorus of protest which assailed the ears of the Republic administration from Yemeni families who relied for their livelihood on assistance sent home by relations working in Aden.

In Aden the decision dramatically changed the political atmosphere. There has always been an undercurrent of animosity between the Adenis and the Yemenis whom some felt to be interlopers and parasites exploiting Aden's prosperity. Whereas a few weeks before the High Commissioner and the Federal government had found it virtually impossible to attract any Adenis of standing outside the old guard into the Federal council they now flocked in. FLOSY threatened death and one Abdul Rahman Basindwah* was assassinated the night before the Council was due to meet. However, such was the faith in the Federal government's intention to restore its prestige that two more councillors allowed themselves to be sworn in before the session began, bringing the total Adeni membership in the Federal Council to twenty-two.

South Arabia looked to the Federal government to revenge Basindwah and carry out its threat to deport Yemenis. Several systems had been proposed to carry the policy out, amongst them was the suggestion that the nearest fifty Yemenis to any incident would be deported and the householders of the street fined. To carry out this policy the Federal government had to have the co-operation of the High Commissioner and through him the British government. Although an initial 148 unemployed Yemenis of no fixed address were shipped over the border, the British government declined to continue the policy. The deportations

* It is maintained in some circles that the NLF carried out the killing on orders from Taiz. They were given a free hand as to which victim they chose from amongst the councillors and selected Basindwah because he was closely related to Muhammad Salim Basindwah, al Asnag's Chief Lieutenant in FLOSY . By doing so they achieved a double blow against the Federal government and FLOSY. Asnag is reported to have been furious when he learnt who had been killed. The incident aggravated the already uneasy relations between the factions within FLOSY.

offended a basic principle of the rule of law in that those punished had received no trial and had committed no crime. The prevailing view of South Arabians was that though this was perfectly reasonable in Whitehall it was a pity that the British did not uphold the law of which they were so proud in other ways. No terrorist or murderer had been punished since the Emergency began and the militants were able to attack British troops with impunity safe from a judicial deterrent. The Federal ministers complained that the conditions which had thrown up the policy to close the borders and deport had been largely created by British inability to implement the laws. The bluff had been called and once it was realised that the Federal government was helpless in the face of British opposition, FLOSY soon regained the lost ground and the terror continued. Few incidents did more harm to the Federal government in the eyes of their people. They felt it was a puppet indeed, tied to Britain's apron strings and smacked down if it showed any initiative of its own.

Before the full extent of the Federal humiliation became clear they chalked up another victory. Muhammad Hassan Obali the Adeni Minister of Education confounded the critics and brought off a feat considered impossible by even his closest colleagues. For more than a year the schools had been closed. Encouraged by FLOSY the students had stayed away from school and had formed the nucleus of many a pro-FLOSY demonstration. The schools were due to re-open in September. FLOSY told the students to stay away, the Federal government told them to go back. On the first day of term there was a 95% attendance. Obali succeeded by brilliantly exploiting the momentary upsurge of Federal prestige and the frustration felt by the bulk of the students who saw their future threatened by continued absence from the classroom. He also initiated his opportune tactics by forming his own bands of pro-Federal students who routed and eventually took over the FLOSY-inspired 'Arab Students' Union for the Occupied South'. British officials at the Ministry of Education made prim noises about the ethics of the Minister's tactics yet there can be no doubt that without them thousands of young South Arabians would have lost another year's schooling through no fault of their own.

The border remained closed until December when it was re-opened as a conciliatory gesture to the United Nations. For the last two months the effectiveness of the sanction was seriously weakened by the activities of smugglers. Many thousands of pounds worth of Yemeni qat was seized and burnt by the Federal authorities but enough got through to bring the Adeni market back to normal.

The prestige of the Federal government was waning fast and many of the ministers were losing heart. Even the news that part of the NLF had formally broken with FLOSY in November failed to cheer them up. British control had made them look foolish and had isolated them from the people. British civil servants provided much of the cement which held the Federation together yet their presence so necessary to put Federal administration on its feet was fast becoming self-defeating. A traditional and important

aspect of Arab rule is that the ruler should be accessible to the people high or low, and it is through the personal contact that he takes decisions and maintains his influence. In their states the Federal rulers were able to continue the custom. The complicated machinery of Federal government with its finance votes and committees made it impossible. Even its most basic decisions especially those concerning security which as often as not also involved the British Services and Aden Police became bogged down in endless exchange of minutes and meetings. One example will suffice. Two shanty towns of perhaps five hundred people had grown up on the outskirts of the Federal capital of al Ittihad. They had both provided cover for bazooka attacks on ministers' houses and were obvious security risks. They should have been cleared away. The decision was soon taken in principle but never carried out due to interminable haggling over compensation to the inhabitants. One, Hiswa, was just inside Aden Colony. Federal servants driving through it to work one morning were appalled to see two large NLF flags flying from the gables of huts on either side of the road immediately next door to an Aden Police Post. The Federal authorities asked the Aden Police to remove them. The Aden Police demurred; no offence had been committed. The talks went on until one man driving back stopped his car and pulled them down himself. Such acts of initiative were few and far between.

By the time the ninth anniversary of the Federation's inception arrived on 11 February 1967 little enthusiasm was left for what most now regarded as a lost cause. The outward appearances were still there. The Federal flag flew from al Ittihad and there was no part of the country which the rebels could claim to hold. The Federal forces still gave an appearance of loyalty, and the administration appeared to work. Yet the facade was fast crumbling as the cancer of revolution spread outwards from Aden into the army, the police and the very Councils of the Federation. On the day of the celebrations Aden was paralysed with a general strike, al Ittihad had been rather ineffectively mortared and a battery of projectiles timed to go off during the parade discovered and disarmed. A mine was found on the helicopter pad where Sir Richard Turnbull was scheduled to alight and it is small wonder that the attendance was unusually small. The faint-hearted had tried to persuade the High Commissioner to stay away as there was real fear of an attempt on his life. He refused and carried off his part with aplomb. Although the 'festivities' passed off without further incident and there was a good deal of forced joviality, everybody was glad to get back home safe and sound.

The Aden suburb of al Mansura lies some eight miles across the bay from the main port in a wide expanse of brown desert. It was built as a model township in the early sixties, with an extravagantly designed market and well laid out jail. The British administration regarded it as the major success in a drive to solve the Colony's chronic housing shortage.

The Arabs jokingly call al Mansura 'City of Sand'; the surrounding desert offers no protection and the high monsoon of summer brings

sandstorms which make life unbearable in the narrow streets. Sand is everywhere in a yellow fuzz that cloaks the town, making it almost invisible from the nearby coast road to Little Aden. Nevertheless with the cheap government rents and modern conveniences the square, gaily painted houses, proved a great attraction. Demand soon exceeded supply, and it was no surprise that at least one member of the Aden government earned himself a considerable amount of money and great popularity by ensuring that his constituents and friends secured the best houses. Later, when the going became harder he wisely abandoned public office and opened a bar instead. This was in the good old days: by the evening of 27 February 1967 things were different. Al Mansura had already achieved that air of studied neglect common to most Arab cities: the effect heightened by the presence of rival slogans daubed on walls and bullet scars which disfigured many of the houses.

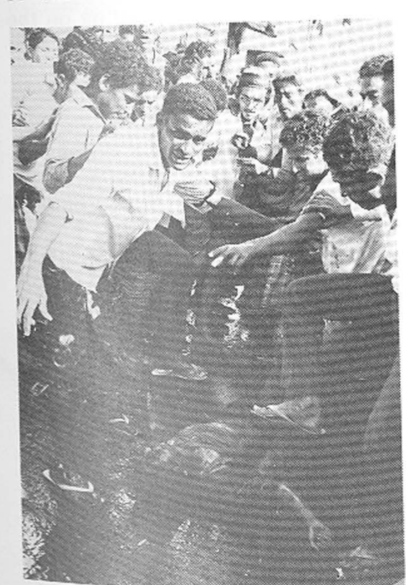
Scarcely a night went by when the silence was not broken by the crump of a grenade or the chatter of machine-guns as supporters of the FLOSY and NLF carried out their attacks on British patrols. Men were often killed or injured; some unlucky enough to be at the scene of an incident were struck down by splinters from a grenade or answering fire from British troops—others found by relatives lying in the street labelled as an 'Imperialist stooge' shot by the obsequious unknown gunman, or rubbed out as a result of some dark Arabian feud. Law and order almost completely broke down. A man could be arraigned before the courts on a parking offence, but the most he could expect for murder would be a well paid stay in the Al Mansura jail used as a detention centre for captured terrorists. In the Aden of 1967 murder was commonplace and after dark sensible folk stayed indoors.*

It was the time of evening meal and the streets were almost deserted. A few urchins played Arabian hop-scotch at a street corner while the occasional black and yellow taxi cruised by hopefully looking for late fares. By 7 pm most families settled down for the night, preferring the delights of Aden television to the uncertain dangers of the streets.

In one of the grander houses on the outskirts of the town a middle-aged woman preparing supper for her family happened to glance out of the window. Two men had climbed over the high purdah wall which surrounded the house and were struggling to place a large charge of explosives on the windowsill. The woman screamed. As the men fled the three sons of the house came out to see what all the noise was about. The eldest was despatched to the house of the family friend and neighbour, Aden's Assistant Commissioner of Police, Hamed Khan, and quickly returned with two constables. A brief discussion followed and one of the policemen, helped by an old and sleepy tribesman who was supposed to be the watchman, gingerly carried the explosives out into the road. The

*January— 12 killed, 82 wounded. February—14 killed, 146 wounded.

11 *The ruined home of Abdul Qawi Mackawee*



12 *Mackawee funeral. The mob kicks to death a supporter of the South Arabian League.*

explosion could be heard twelve miles away in Government House where Sir Richard Turnbull was about to have dinner: when the dust settled, three sons of Abdul Qawi Mackawee, political leader of FLOSY, lay dead together with their watchman and police companions.

Mackawee, charming, personable and ineffectual. How many times in the previous two years he must have regretted leaving his comfortable job. By this time Mackawee was way out of his depth. His book-keeping methods, learnt in the quiet of an Aden counting house, proved a dismal failure when applied to the ways of up-country tribesmen—he had never in his life been far out of Aden and was baffled by the complex and unsophisticated nature of the people with whom he had to deal. It was small wonder that he preferred the cool of his air-conditioned villa in Cairo to campaigning in the rugged mountains of the Aden Protectorates.

In Aden people liked Mackawee, they sympathised with him and considered him harmless, a victim of circumstances beyond his control. All were deeply shocked by the murder of his sons and if some felt that he had brought the disaster upon himself by giving unspoken consent to cold-blooded killings carried out in the name of his Front, then they kept their thoughts to themselves.

Adenis dearly loved a good funeral: they have an almost Irish attitude to death and in the past have sometimes put on the most convincing displays of grief for the most unlikely people. On this occasion there was no doubt as to a genuine feeling of sympathy for Mackawee, and FLOSY agitators were quick to take advantage of it. The party was already competing on the ground for support with the breakway NLF and this was a not-to-be missed chance of rallying an impressive display of public solidarity.

Throughout the night white-shirted young men slipped from house to house organising and co-ordinating the morrow's procession while their mothers and sisters sat up sewing banners and painting slogans on placards. Not to be outdone, the NLF condemned the killings and promised to send a delegation while the pro-FLOSY Aden Trades Union Congress declared a general strike and a day of mourning.

Of course, the British were blamed. Cairo Radio declared that it had positive proof that British Intelligence was responsible for the killings, and Mackawee himself seized the microphone in the Yemeni capital of Sana to threaten revenge against the 'Imperialist murderers'. Despite all the noise and propaganda, most people had more than a sneaking feeling that the real culprits were amongst the hard faced men, who gathered under the banners of the NLF for the funeral in the steaming Arab town of Crater on the following day.

For some time past the FLOSY High Command and its Egyptian backers had been desperately striving to unite all the extremists in one organisation and in the process had been quietly liquidating some of the more recalcitrant NLF supporters. In consequence, the NLF had privately warned Mackawee of retaliation unless he put a stop to this policy; they had intended the fatal charge to underline this, not anticipating the full results.

Many of those who gathered in Crater on that hot afternoon must have suspected the truth; although one prominent FLOSY supporter* had been gunned down only two days before it was still heresy to suggest differences in revolutionary ranks. Both sides made strenuous efforts to preserve the facade of unity: in any case there were more vulnerable scapegoats on hand.

The South Arabian League had never been happy as partners with Asnag in OLOS. The marriage was short-lived as President Nasser did not look kindly upon the League's habit of accepting money and advice from Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

In 1966 they decided to return to Aden. The real leaders held back to see how things worked out, and instead sent the garrulous Shaikhan al Habshi to look after their affairs. Things worked out badly; unwilling to share the responsibility of ruling with the Federal government, yet at the same time openly consorting with the British and Saudis, the party fell between two stools. They were hated by the extremists for having 'betrayed the revolution' and regarded by the Egyptians as being Saudi stooges. On the other hand, the League were mistrusted by the British and Federal authorities as they could never bring themselves to climb down off the fence.

Thus after the death of Mackawee's sons the day before, the arrival of a tense little group of SAL supporters to take part in the funeral procession of 'revolutionary martyrs' infuriated the extremists. High words were soon exchanged, scuffles broke out and a SAL banner was ripped down and trampled underfoot. Enraged, two SAL men drew pistols and fired a number of shots at their tormentors before fleeing to the sanctuary of a nearby mosque. The mob howled in pursuit and cornered the luckless Arabs in the minaret. There, after a brief struggle, they were both hurled down to the waiting crowd below and savagely beaten to death with wood torn from nearby packing cases. The Aden Civil Police looked on. Still twitching, the bodies were then triumphantly displayed to the international press before being dragged around the streets of Crater: a swift eddy in the stream of the procession, spat upon by the women and kicked by the urchins.

These excitements threw out the well-planned organisation of the procession so that it was not until after four o'clock that the head of the crowd turned into the long straight road which leads to the Aidrus Mosque. The oldest and most famous of Aden's holy places, the Aidrus Mosque with its ancient history and tall minaret standing out white against the sullen backcloth of the surrounding hills had been a natural choice for the burial ground. The six coffins draped in the red, white and black flags of Arab revolution were slowly borne up the street to the accompaniment of a

*Said Hasan Somali, Minister of Local Government in the Mackawee Cabinet, shot in Maalla on 26 February.

steadily increasing chant of 'Mack-a-wee', 'Mack-a-wee' as the 10,000-strong crowd responded to the expert direction of its cheer-leaders. Apart from FLOSY and the NLF most of the unions and sports clubs were represented. Each contingent marched under its own banner and many of their supporters held aloft pictures of Mackawee and his sons. Far and away most impressive was the 500-strong block of black-cloaked* women whose shrill voices screaming for revenge could be heard above all.

By the time the crowd reached the mosque, emotion was at its peak: the sound of chanting and stamping of feet rose to a crescendo and the people were ready for anything. A party of youths who had been biding their time all afternoon flung themselves across the road in a cordon to prevent anybody from dispersing and small boys scurried to and fro distributing water to the thirsty marchers.

Suddenly, as the coffins entered the gloom of the mosque—there was silence, a moment of truth—a time when the whole world seemed to pause, it was a chance which the agitators took with both hands. Anonymous shouts of 'down with the League', 'death to the traitors' were immediately taken up by thousands of voices, and with one accord the crowd turned and headed back down the road for the SAL headquarters about half a mile away.

The South Arabian League's Headquarters in Aden was a long, one-storey building surrounded by a high wall on the outskirts of the town. About twenty members who had been discussing the day's events heard advance news of the crowd's intentions and now took up positions on the roof. All means of escape were cut off so they were harangued by Shaikhan al Habshi and, with a miscellany of weapons, prepared to defend themselves to the last.

One of the more clear-headed rang up the Aden Armed Police to demand protection, the rest contented themselves with firing random shots down the street from which the crowd was likely to appear. The sound of firing and the sight of two lorry loads of steel-helmeted, black-belted armed policemen speeding towards the SAL building, had a sobering effect on the advancing crowd so that in the event, only a hard core of FLOSY and NLF supporters faced a hurriedly formed cordon of police outside SAL's wrought iron gate. The hiatus which followed was quickly broken by SAL themselves, who opened up a steady fire on their attackers, killing three.

Everybody then shot at everybody else and for the next five minutes confusion was compounded and only brought to an end by the timely arrival of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers who briskly dispersed the crowd and stopped the fighting. The NLF and FLOSY gunmen quickly melted away so that when the mob had disappeared, the troops were confronted with the amazing spectacle of what seemed to them to be twenty

* Exactly one year later on 28 February 1968 a party of some 30 women attempted to march to the mosque and lay wreaths on the six graves. Within a few minutes they were pounced upon by NLF militia and driven off in Landrovers. The wreaths were burnt in the street.

armed terrorists thanking Allah and the British for having saved their lives.

Grimly the troops moved in. The hapless South Arabian Leaguers were promptly disarmed and lined up against the wall of their headquarters as the soldiers commenced to search the building.

Twenty minutes later the telephone rang in the house of a British political officer: it was Shaikhan al Habshi.

Eventually the Arabian accent gave way to Northumbrian. 'What do yer mean, he's allowed to carry a pistol, this bloody joker has got two landmines under his desk!'

The list of other unlicensed arms and explosives seized at the SAL Headquarters included: three 36 grenades, one clamp mine, three pistols, one tear gas grenade, two tins of detonators, four pistol magazines and a quantity of assorted ammunition.

The violence of the day was not yet over. That evening, Foreign Office man, Tony Ingeldow, and his pretty dark-haired wife were giving a cocktail party in their spacious Maalla flat. They were a popular couple and the party was well attended, so that a good cross-section of Aden's middle-ranking British officialdom chatted gaily over their drinks while the two children of the house slept peacefully in the next room. If the unexplained absence of one of the white turbanned Arab servants who unobtrusively handed round the refreshments was noticed, it was only as a domestic inconvenience, common enough in South Arabia, and the whole atmosphere was relaxed.

Three wives working as telephonists at Government House swapped notes on their charges, bronzed secretaries sipped their gins and flirted with the younger men, whilst their seniors gossiped happily in the corners.

At precisely nine o'clock there was a blinding flash of light as a landmine, hidden in the bookcase, exploded and cut a swath of destruction across the room. Of the three telephonists, two lay dying and the third was maimed for life; nine others were wounded to some degree. The uninjured recovered quickly. Some went off to guide the ambulances which were soon on their way, as the remainder gave rudimentary first aid to the wounded. An RAF dentist who had himself been hit by flying splinters made a valiant but futile attempt to save one of the dying women; Ken Brazier, the BBC correspondent, who lived in the flat above, rushed down to help before hurrying off to the cable office.*

The British community were stunned by the tragedy. Although attacks were a daily occurrence, they were directed mainly against the troops and casualties were relatively light. This was the first time that terrorism had struck at the sheltered heart of British social life and it was the first time that a trusted servant had turned against his employers.*

In the next few days dozens of houseboys were given notice, families

* The mine had been hidden in the cupboard of a bookcase. Tidying up before the party, the bookcase had been set straight and books arranged upright. This apparently knocked the mine onto its side, otherwise the destruction would have been much greater.

making plans to bring their children out for the Easter holidays thought again and some started arrangements to send their belongings home. The security rule limiting twelve guests to a party which had already been in force for some time, was from now on strictly applied and the era of the Aden cocktail parties was brought to a close.

The day's events had in various ways made an equal impression on the people of Aden.

That night, forced to take the bodies of their dead to Lahej, having been prevented by the mob from burying them in Aden, the remnants of the South Arabian League quietly packed their bags and moved their headquarters to the strongly guarded residential area of Khormaksar. At the same time, many of the party's frightened supporters, using the allegation that the men had fired on the funeral procession from the mosque, so breaking Muslim traditions, as an excuse, faded away.

On the other hand, FLOSY were jubilant: the success of the procession had exceeded their wildest expectations and they openly accused the NLF of being responsible for the Mackawee crime, boasting that the murderers would shortly meet their just deserts.

Over the water in the NLF stronghold of Little Aden they took the hint. Meeting in darkness lit only by the eerie glow given off by burning waste from the massive oil refinery, NLF leaders concluded that the way to survive was to carry on an all-out campaign of murder and intimidation against their FLOSY rivals and so regain control of the revolutionary movement.

In Aden Pandora's box had been opened with a vengeance and from this day on the various communities which had at one time combined to make it a prosperous and happy place, finally broke apart. The final descent into chaos and bloodshed had begun.

* A seventeen year old girl was killed as a result of a grenade thrown at a children's Christmas party in Christmas 1964 but few of the British in Aden in 1967 were around at that time.

Chapter V
Federal Government at Bay
Autumn 1966-Spring 1967

Of ten able politicians in South Arabia, six are in the present Federal Government. Unfortunately they all seem to hold different views.
Visiting British Official—March 1967

Dr Rastgeldi is not an Arab—he is impartial.
Benenson
President of Amnesty International
19 October 1966

The Federal government were worried. In their half-built capital of al Ittihad the Shaikhs watched events in Aden across the bay with increasing alarm. The mounting tide of terrorism in the Colony meant that the Federalis were losing their grip and much of the armament being used against the British in the streets of Aden had either passed through Federal territory without the rulers' knowledge, or with their tacit consent.

The fundamental weakness of the Federal government coincided with that of the territory as a whole—there was no leader. South Arabia had no Nkruma, Kenyatta or Nehru to lead it to independence and it was forced to fall back on lesser fellows. Predictably, the dominant personality in the Federal government, the black bearded, bespectacled Hussain bin Ahmad al Habili, Sharif of Baihan, had retired to his state two years previously and had steadfastly refused to return to al Ittihad. The Sharif was the one man whose prestige, intellect and experience could have held his quarrelsome colleagues together. Instead he preferred to stay in Baihan watching events with a cynical eye and amusing himself by plotting with the Saudis and throwing hard-boiled eggs at visiting journalists. All the while he kept his hands firmly on the valuable portfolio of Federal Minister of the Interior.

Lack of a leader was one problem, the ramshackle Federal constitution was another. Under the existing system the offices of President and Prime Minister did not exist. Instead on the eleventh day of each month a new chairman headed the Supreme Council, which was the cabinet of the government, and each of the fourteen ministers took the chair in turn. As a result only the experts could say who led the Federal government at any one time. The system was initially introduced to dampen the tribal jealousy and mutual suspicion rarely absent from Federal Councils. After nine years it had become ridiculous. The constant change at the top not

only reflected the Federal government's lack of leadership but also prevented the ministers from doing themselves justice. The inarticulate fisherman Naiqa prepared to face the United Nations; the brilliant but immilitary Obali found himself scampering along lines of immaculately turned out Federal soldiers with the brigadier in hot pursuit; Nasir bin Aidris, the young chain-smoking Sultan of Lower Aulaqi, grappled with the intricacies of protocol, while others more suited to the tasks in hand shuffled in the background.

The Federal government readily appreciated the harm done to them by their own constitution and as previously mentioned had invited two experts, Sir Ralph Hone and Sir Gawain Bell, to adjust it. These eminent gentlemen suggested a two-house system, rulers being members of the upper and less powerful house while elected members would eventually sit in the lower, which would provide the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The President was to be a member of the upper house with the privilege of selecting the Prime Minister. No ruler could be a member of the lower house—if he wanted to be, he had to resign his position within his state. There were other suggestions concerning state representation and the elevation of Aden as the capital city which, although hotly debated at the time, had little bearing on the course of future events.

The Federal government rejected the idea of an upper house, principally on economic grounds: South Arabia was not a rich country and members of parliament drawing large government salaries had to be kept to a minimum. After some debate they agreed that no ruler could be a member of the Cabinet. They then set about selecting their President and Prime Minister and defining their respective powers. No ready solution being available, a plethora of committees to study the matter sprang up. As expected they decided to offer the Presidency to the Sharif of Baihan and as expected, the Sharif declined.

The Sharif's refusal left the field wide open. The main contestants for office were Sultan Salih, Minister of Interior—conservative, endlessly patient and vastly knowledgeable of tribal affairs—and his rival, Muhammad Farid al Aulaqi, the Minister of External Affairs, whose excellent English and dapper exterior cloaked relentless ambition. The root of the trouble was that Muhammad Farid could not make up his mind whether he wanted the power of Prime Minister or the glory of the President. He would not risk serving under Salih who had the theoretical power to dismiss him and at the same time could not bear the thought of somebody else pulling the strings. Farid dreamt of the day when the Aulaqi nation would once again dominate South Arabia and concentrated his efforts to this end. He had found common cause with the shy retiring Fadhl bin Ali of Lahej, Minister of Defence, as both had long standing feuds with the South Arabian League whom they rightly suspected Salih of arming.

As Sultan of Lahej, the largest and richest State of Aden, Fadhl bin Ali should have dominated Federal politics. He always dressed in the style of an Indian Maharajah and had been brought up in a world where the Aulaqis

13 Abdu



14 Sulta
General F



13 *Abdul Rahman Girgirah, foremost Adeni supporter of the Federal government.*



14 *Sultan Nasir of Wahidi, greeting his tribal guards accompanied by General Harrington.*

spoke only to Lahej and Lahej spoke only to God—represented in South Arabia by the British Governor in Aden. The Sultan was therefore put out by the small fry with whom he rubbed shoulders in the Supreme Council and could not bring himself to engage in the necessary social and political activities which would have brought him more prominence. He contented himself by throwing his not inconsiderable prestige behind Muhammad Farid.

Sultan Salih was supported by Abdul Rahman Girgirah, the Minister of Information who, as the longest-serving Adeni, could normally control the votes of his three Aden colleagues on the Supreme Council. Girgirah was President of the United National Party and a man of considerable political experience. When his interests were not involved he could be relied upon to give sound advice. Girgirah had been suggested as a compromise for both posts but he settled for deputy President and Minister for Aden Affairs, a new portfolio which had been proposed by Hone and Bell.

The dispute wrangled on. By mid-March it was politically important for the Federal government to produce their new constitution due to the imminent arrival of a United Nations' Mission to investigate the territory's progress to independence. Eventually a meeting of the Supreme Council was called to decide the matter. Sir Richard Turnbull, the High Commissioner, who had been getting more and more impatient, was to attend later to hear the Federal decision.

The meeting was opened by Shaikh Ali Atif, the pedantic and grubby Minister of Health from Lower Yafa'.

'Well,' he said, pushing his turban to one side, 'this is an Arab country and we must abide by Arab traditions.'

Naturally everybody present nodded in solemn agreement.

'It is well known', the Shaikh continued, 'that the most successful Arab monarch in recent history was King Abdul Aziz bin Saud of Saudi Arabia.'

This was old ground and again everyone agreed.

'He united Saudi Arabia and the way he did it', said the Shaikh, 'was to marry from each of the tribes. If the President of South Arabia is to unite the country then he must marry a girl from each of the seventeen States.'

All might have been well if Salim Naiqa had not overheard Muhammad Farid remark, 'Well that lets out our Adeni friends—they can't manage one woman, let alone seventeen.'

Naiqa, a baldheaded bull of a man from Little Aden, normally said nothing, but now he was furious. Rising from his seat he seized a heavy glass ashtray which he bashed on the table shouting, 'I've got fourteen children from one wife! Can anybody beat that?'

Somebody replied that it was performance and not production that was required.

Taking advantage of the laughter, Shaikh Ali went on, 'I am not putting myself forward but I should like it to be put on record that I am quite capable of this. Furthermore, in order that everything should be above board, the girls should be inspected regularly.' He then suggested that Dr

Cen Jones, his Permanent Secretary, be appointed to take on the task.

'Certainly not,' roared his colleagues. 'We must have a neutral doctor, one from the Royal Air Force.'

Girgirah intervened to bring the meeting back to practical lines, but feelings had been ruffled and the problem of the constitution was never resolved.*

In the meantime the Federal government had other things on its mind, nothing less than the arrest of the Sultan of Wahidi and the Federal Minister of Agriculture for complicity in mass murder.

Late in the afternoon of 22 November 1966 a Dakota of Aden Airways left the hill town of Maifah, the Wahidi capital, on a routine flight for Aden. As well as a crew of three it had on board twenty-eight passengers including Muhammad bin Said, the Prime Minister of Wahidi, Major Tim Goshen, a British political officer, Graham Macglashen, a young representative of Shell, and twenty-five other passengers including one carrying a faded Aden Airways bag. Some fifteen minutes later the plane crashed and all aboard perished.

Investigators arriving at the scene of the crash soon found irrefutable evidence that it had been caused by an explosion in the passenger cabin.

The Sultan of Wahidi, Nasir bin Abdullah, was in al Ittihad at the time of the disaster. He was a small man in stature and intellect, perpetually dwarfed by a large mauve turban. His brief moments of animation were usually confined to conversations about fishing with his friend Salim Naiqa.

When the news of the tragedy was first broken to the Sultan there can be no doubt that he was deeply shocked and later when the implications became known he made an emotional speech vowing to do anything in his power to bring the murderers to justice—it was a speech which profoundly impressed his colleagues in the Supreme Council and convinced some of his innocence. Investigations soon revealed that Muhammad bin Said was a bitter personal enemy of the Sultan who feared his growing influence in the state. The Sultan had as his naib in Wahidi a younger brother, the Amir Muhammad, whose hatred of the Prime Minister verged on mania and who had made two previous attempts to assassinate him. Just after the Dakota left the Amir remarked that the plane would crash. Witnesses would later testify to seeing him hand a package to a passenger about to board the aircraft in Maifah.

The Amir Muhammad and two close associates were arrested and brought to Aden, but the case got no further until the arrival of two detectives from Scotland Yard. Questioning of witnesses was difficult because of fear of retaliation but slowly the bare facts of the story began to emerge. The Federal government was later told that the Sultan's animosity for his minister was well known and Egyptian Intelligence, over quick to

* The story of the meeting seems improbable but it is as described to the author and a colleague by Muhammad Hasan Obali, Minister of Education, who was present.

seize the main chance, saw a way in which it could get rid of an outstanding opponent and at the same time discredit the Federal government. The Sultan was contacted and an agent visited his house in al Ittihad and made up the fatal charge in an airlines bag. The charge was then taken by air to Ataq and thence to the Amir Muhammad in Maifah. Almost certainly the Sultan had no idea that his brother would place the charge in an aeroplane and probably intended it for the Prime Minister's house; the circumstantial evidence against him convinced the majority of his colleagues that at any rate he was morally responsible.

At a heated session of the Supreme Council it was decided to place the Sultan under a form of house arrest, the chief dissenters being Salim Naiqa for reasons of friendship and Sultan Nasir of Fadhli who, as Minister of Justice, saw he might have some nasty decisions to make.

After the meeting the Sultan was called to the office of the Ministry of Internal Security and Sultan Salih told him that he was to be held under arrest pending further investigation. The Wahidi emphatically reiterated his innocence and there was a slight moment of tension when his bodyguard, standing outside the glass door, lowered a sub-machine gun and for a moment looked as if he would take matters into his own hands. He was efficiently disarmed by a Federal Guardsman who had been standing by waiting for just this moment.

A few days later the Sultan was replaced as Ruler of Wahidi by Ali, son of the murdered Prime Minister.

The Federal government never brought Sultan Nasir to trial, mainly because they were engrossed in other problems and the machinery for trying him did not exist. He stayed under house arrest until October when he was joined by his brother the Amir Muhammad, released from detention in al Mansura. Both informed the Red Cross that they had *carte blanche* to leave the country but intended to go to Wahidi. When the NLF took over the Sultan was arrested and charged with high treason and helping to set up 'the bogus Federation'. He was given a ten-year sentence to be spent 'in construction work for the benefit of the people'. As far as is known the air disaster was not mentioned in the court. Three months later the Sultan was released.*

The interrogation and detention of the Amir Muhammad was similar to that undergone by several hundreds of Arabs between December 1963 and October 1967. The State of Emergency empowered the High Commissioner to arrest and detain without trial any person suspected of being connected with terrorist activities. However, nobody could be arrested merely on account of his political opinions—there had to be clear indications that he was connected with activities of violence. Therefore, according to the British, the inmates of al Mansura prison and the Fort Morbut interrogation centre were not political detainees in the normally accepted meaning of the term but suspected terrorists.

* The Sultan and his brother now live in Abu Dhabi, where the Sultan's eldest son is an officer in the Defence Force and graduated from Sandhurst.

Under the State of Emergency no provision was made to deal with terrorist suspects except by trial by jury. In the prevailing conditions in Aden this was clearly out of the question. Any Arab sitting on such a jury would have been an obvious target for intimidation, as would be witnesses. The chances of the authorities collecting either witnesses or a jury prepared to bring in an unbiased verdict after the Khalifa trial* were nil.

Sir Richard Turnbull asked for further powers to deal summarily with suspected terrorists but the Labour government always refused his requests and it was not until the summer of 1967 that his successor, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, obtained permission for magistrates to pass severe sentences in such cases.

The result of this policy, coupled with the knowledge of British withdrawal, was a steady increase in terrorism.† There was no deterrent and captured terrorists could look forward to a comfortable stay in al Mansura and a regular allowance from the government. When the people realised that no effective action was being taken to halt the spread of violence, the flow of intelligence to the authorities dried up. Although it was technically against the law to call a general strike, by March 1967 at the merest hint from FLOSY or the NLF the shutters went up, the markets were deserted and the bus and taxi services ground to a halt. The Adenis were not willing to risk property, life and limb for a government which was too feeble to enforce its own laws. In the four years of Emergency no terrorist was executed or even brought to trial, with the sole exception of Khalifa.

Very early on the NLF appreciated that if they were to survive then the Arab Special Branch officers working with the Aden Police would have to be eliminated. During 1965, by assassination and intimidation, the Arab Special Branch was wiped out. The intelligence organisation which remained consisted solely of Britons, many of whom had newly arrived in the territory and few of whom could speak Arabic.

After 1965 the principal source of information on terrorist activities left to the British was the Fort Morbut interrogation centre. The interrogation centre was a narrow, two storey building situated within an army cantonment perched high upon the cliffs overlooking the harbour entrance. It commanded one of the most beautiful views in Aden. Originally it had been the headquarters of the Military Special Investigation Branch but was now surrounded by barbed wire. The upper floor was used for interrogation and offices, the lower contained six cells which opened out onto a small exercise yard. The interrogators were mainly drawn from the army which alone could provide men with the

* See Chapter III.

† In 1964 terrorist activity resulted in 4 killed and 32 wounded. In 1965 this had risen to 33 killed and 173 wounded. In 1966 there were 61 killed and 426 wounded (this included 28 killed in the Aden Airways crash). The first four months of 1967 claimed 60 dead and 364 wounded and the casualty figures reached twin peaks in June (112 killed and 209 wounded) and October (280 killed and around 400 wounded). The total killed for 1967 exceeded 900 with 2,000 wounded.

necessary training and linguistic ability. Strict instructions were drawn up prohibiting the use of violence or physical force. This was not only for humanitarian reasons but experience has shown that information gained in this way is usually unreliable. From the outset the interrogation centre had considerable success and provided information which led to the recovery of caches of arms and the arrest of a large number of terrorists.

Egyptian Intelligence soon realised the danger posed by Fort Morbut and cast about for ways to reduce its effectiveness. Surrounded as it was by a heavy guard, physical destruction was out of the question and in any case only a temporary measure. So they hit upon the ingenious method of interfering with the centre's work by propaganda. Terrorists undergoing training in Cairo and Taiz were instructed that if captured they were to complain at the earliest possible moment of ill-treatment and at the same time told that if they kept silent no harm would come to them. Before long lurid tales of torture and brutality began to appear in the Egyptian press and on Cairo Radio. The cry was quickly taken up by the Afro-Asians and the Eastern Bloc in the United Nations.

The stories also reached the ears of Amnesty International, the organisation concerned with the welfare of political detainees throughout the world. The Swedish branch of Amnesty appointed Dr Salahdin Rastgeldi, a gynaecologist of Kurdish origin, to investigate the matter. Dr Rastgeldi, supported by Peter Benenson, a founder member and President of Amnesty in Britain, applied to the Foreign Office for permission to go to Aden and carry out an investigation. In a letter later published, Walter Padley, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, refused. The Minister pointed out that Andre Rochat, representative of the Red Cross, was making regular visits to both al Mansura and Fort Morbut, that a mission such as the one suggested would amount to a judicial inquiry and 'would lead to demands from parties less disinterested than Amnesty'. Further, as the detainees in Aden were not political detainees, Rastgeldi and Amnesty had no locus standi.

Nothing daunted, Rastgeldi set out for Arabia. His first stop was at Cairo where he spent a week conferring with FLOSY leaders and the Egyptian Foreign Office before flying to Aden where he arrived on the 28 July 1966. The doctor made an early call upon Sir Richard Turnbull to demand permission to visit the detainees. He hinted that unless his request was granted he would see to it that a considerable 'international scandal' would ensue. Armed with his copy of Padley's letter Sir Richard refused. His bluff having failed the doctor stalked angrily out of Government House and back to his room in the Rock Hotel where during the next five days he interviewed Trades Union representatives, released detainees and FLOSY front organisations, returning via Cairo on the 4 August.

According to Benenson, the Foreign Secretary, George Brown, approached him on the 19 September and asked him to prevent the publication of Rastgeldi's report. He refused. There is no doubt that the British government were worried about the reports coming out of Aden

and George Brown was considering the appointment of an investigator. The announcement was scheduled for November but in the event was brought forward by the precipitate action by Amnesty. On 17 October Hans Frank, a Swedish lawyer, handed a copy of Rastgeldi's report to the British Ambassador in Stockholm together with an open letter to Harold Wilson. The letter alleged that during his visit to Aden Dr Rastgeldi had investigated three-hundred cases of torture. 'British troops', the letter went on, 'had torn nails from hands and feet, extinguished cigarettes on detainees whom they had also starved and beaten.' In answer to questions in the House of Commons on the following day the Foreign Secretary announced his intention of appointing an investigator and later, on 24 October, it was learnt that this was to be Sir Roderick Bowen QC, a former Liberal MP and Deputy Speaker.

Bowen, a Welshman of considerable wit and reputation, spent eleven days in Aden, during which he made exhaustive inquiries, and returning to the United Kingdom on the 9 November he settled down to write his report

In the meantime the Rastgeldi allegations had given rise to considerable controversy. Given that Dr Rastgeldi was an exceptional man, during his seven day stay in Aden to interview the minimum of three hundred persons he must have worked very hard indeed. Working a maximum sixteen hours a day in the heat of Aden he must have been able to interview three men an hour. Benenson, who supported the allegations, flew into Aden in an attempt to gain more evidence. It appears that he was already in disagreement with his colleagues in Amnesty over matters other than Aden detainees. The details of the dispute are clouded with allegation and counter-allegation, but it may be assumed that he badly needed to be proved right on Aden to maintain his position.

During his three-day stay Benenson met the FLOSY 'Mayor' of Aden, Fuad Khalifa, as well as members of the FLOSY front organisation 'Graduates Congress'. On the second day, 15 November, he announced his intention of giving a press conference. Accordingly the press trooped up to the bar of the Rock Hotel where the Amnesty President sat, a small grey owl of a man, nervously nibbling peanuts and twiddling with his waistcoat buttons. It soon became apparent that Benenson believed he had obtained the information which he sought. He reaffirmed his belief in the veracity of Rastgeldi's report and stated he had obtained new evidence to support it. He also announced his intention to request the British government to appoint an ombudsman, paid by the British but selected by the International Confederation of Jurists, to investigate allegations as they occurred. It was also apparent that Mr Benenson was no expert on the current situation of Middle Eastern affairs in general.

His visit occurred at a time when the best part of the Republican government of neighbouring Yemen had been taken to Cairo and placed in detention by the Egyptians who were supposed to be supporting it. Republican refugees were flooding into Aden to join the hundreds of Royalist Yemenis already there. Vastly impressed by the interest and

propaganda created by Amnesty activities over Aden, some of the Republican exiles turned up at the press conference and attempted to interest him in their affairs. Benenson appeared to be taken aback—the kidnapping of a government, tales of the use of poison gas and the massacre of hundreds by the Egyptians in the Yemen was not what he had come for. He seemed hard put to explain that while the prisoners of the British were of interest, those of the Egyptians were not. Eventually, when the Yemenis saw Mr Benenson was under the impression that their detained Prime Minister, Hasan al Amri, was an Egyptian, even they realised that there was nothing more to be done.

The Bowen report was published on the 20 December, Rastgeldi's a day earlier. Bowen criticised the Aden High Commission for 'a most regrettable failure to deal expeditiously and adequately with allegations of cruelty'. He went on, 'During the period from 18 October to 26 December 1965 serious allegations came to light as shown by the files of the Legal Advisor and Director of Medical Services.' Both had pressed for investigation following two cases, one of severe bruising and another of torn ear drums. An officer of Special Branch investigated and reported that 'the complaints are more or less localised to two rooms of the interrogation centre and circulate around three men.' Hickling, the legal adviser, had approached the Director of Army Legal Services who in a memorandum stated the complaints and medical reports did not in the main appear to substantiate the allegations but expressed the view that the allegations should be put to the three men if the Director of Intelligence agreed. Consent was not forthcoming. By that time the three men had left the Command. Mr Bowen added, 'I am satisfied that any suggestion that they were spirited away because of the allegations would be unjustified. The fact remains that if investigations had been carried out they would have been readily available.'

Bowen produced seven main recommendations. Five of them, concerned with the tightening up of procedure for investigating complaints and the introduction of increased medical facilities for the detainees, were accepted; the remainder suggested the removal of the interrogation centre to al Mansura and the replacement of military interrogators by civilians. Both recommendations were rejected on the grounds of practicability. Al Mansura was under daily attack from Shaikh Uthman-based terrorists and there were no civilians available to replace the army personnel. Mr Bowen went out of his way to emphasise that the latter recommendation 'was not intended to reflect in any way on the present members of the interrogation staff or to suggest that military personnel are any less suitable than civilians for this work, but that its purpose is to make the interrogation team responsible exclusively to the 'High Commissioner'. Mr Bowen also said, 'The main strain of protecting the population and dealing with the terrorists falls upon military personnel and the police. I certainly gained the impression that generally speaking they discharge their onerous duties with great restraint.'

Somewhat surprisingly Amnesty welcomed the Bowen Report and claimed that 'We completely consider that the report vindicates Dr Rastgeldi as a serious, impartial observer.'

Rastgeldi's report in the main reflected Amnesty's open letter to Wilson. He began, 'Many innocent people have been arrested since the proclamation of the State of Emergency' and continued to list alleged tortures and brutalities. His estimate of between two hundred and three hundred detainees compares with Bowen's precise figure of one hundred and ten. A copy of the report had been sent to the United Nations' Committee on Colonialism where it became a matter of some concern for the Afro-Asian and Eastern Bloc members.

The affair had a curious aftermath. Following the Mackawee funeral in February, Benenson suddenly claimed that British troops had killed over fifty Arabs and that the press had been prevented from reporting this because of strict censorship imposed by the authorities. Every leading newspaper in Britain with correspondents in Aden refuted Benenson's charges and denied that their dispatches had ever been tampered with. Ken Brazier made headlines himself with his denial on the BBC pointing out that it would be impossible for fifty people to have been killed in a small place like Aden without the press hearing of it.

That was that. A few days later Amnesty disclaimed Benenson's charges and the former President, who had been resigning on and off since December, finally withdrew from the scene.

In the strained conditions of Aden, the heat of street fighting and raids upon rebel hideouts, undoubtedly some people were roughly handled. Equally the conclusion is inescapable that the methods of interrogation and detention employed by the British in Aden were the most humane in the Middle East and compared favourably with those used in similar circumstances anywhere else in the world.

Long before the controversy over the detainees became headlines in the world press, a representative of the International Red Cross was making regular visits to both al Mansura and Fort Morbut. André Rochat was a man who had found his true vocation. He was a tall, spare Swiss, usually clothed in a grey lightweight suit and tropical trilby which he raised frequently with a grave continental courtesy. He possessed a deep sense of conviction and if he found anything which he considered either unjust or unreasonable he did not hesitate to give the authorities, or for that matter the detainees, the full benefit of his opinions. Rochat's Arabic was execrable and when excited his English was difficult to follow. This sometimes led to misunderstandings and the ill feeling engendered by the Rastgeldi affair did not make his task any easier. Nevertheless Rochat was respected by both sides and his mission was generally successful. This was particularly so in the last few months before independence when the situation in al Mansura became explosive. By August, the prison was continuously under fire and the number of detainees had reached a record peak of around two hundred and thirty. The staff, mainly senior NCOs of

the army, were perilously thin on the ground. Incidents in which they were insulted, spat at and attacked became frequent, only their discipline prevented them making reprisals and so making matters worse. A surprise search of the four blocks resulted in the discovery of an alarming assortment of home-made weapons, including clubs and a form of Molotov cocktail. The possibility of a full-scale prison riot was an ever-present factor. Rochat and his elderly assistant, Francis Rais, bent their energies to prevent this and the fact that the riot never came off must partly be due to their efforts.

When on duty Rochat appeared to be covered in red crosses. There was one on his hat, his breast pocket and his brief case. His car, a white Renault station waggon, was adorned with red crosses on every side and these were splendidly reinforced by a large flag. Even so he never appeared to be surprised when people asked, as they frequently did, who he was.

Although the Red Cross Aden Mission was important, Rochat is best known for his work in the Yemen. The civil war between the Yemeni Royalists and Republicans with their Egyptian allies began in 1962 and continued with much slaughter on both sides in the succeeding years. The Red Cross Mission mainly concentrated on the Royalist side, providing hospital and medical treatment in the remote areas. Early on in the war, stories began to circulate alleging the use of poison gas by the Egyptian Air Force in their attacks on Royalist tribesmen. This was always vehemently denied by Cairo.

Towards the end of 1966 the number of reports intensified and the Red Cross medical teams refused to continue their work unless they were issued with gas masks. Because of the political neutrality of the International Red Cross they were withdrawn; to accede to the request would have been tantamount to stating that the reports were true.

In January 1967 the Royalists invited a large party of the international press to their mountain stronghold of Kitaf which they claimed had been gassed three weeks before. On 5 January the American entrepreneur, Bushrod Howard, a remarkable figure with horned rimmed spectacles, orchid, and flowing Arab cloak lined with golden sovereigns, chaperoned the party of twenty journalists, including two women, who made the formidable one hundred and twenty mile journey by donkey and foot across the mountains and sands from the Saudi Arabian border town of Najran.

On arrival in Kitaf with its brown buildings half invisible against the mountainside, the press saw a remarkable sight. Animals still standing in their stalls stone dead and the carcases of others strewn about the streets and fields, over forty newly dug graves and a number of wide but shallow craters. The survivors of the raid, mostly children, illiterate tribesmen and the old, to a man described the same thing. The aeroplanes, the bombs, the blue smoke followed by the choking, the blistering, the frothing mouth, blindness and death. The journalists were particularly impressed by the fragments of bomb casing still in evidence. Having endured the

discomforts of the journey, they knew too much about Yemeni powers of organisation to believe that this was a gigantic hoax. The Royalists claimed one hundred and twenty people had fallen victim to the attack and at the Najran hospital doctors said they had treated one hundred and eighteen victims. When Bushrod offered to have one of the graves opened so that the body it held could be inspected they refused; they had already seen enough. In the light of this evidence it was obvious that which had previously been considered rumour could quite well have been fact.

So enthusiastic was Bushrod to prove the existence of gas that he had the carcase of a dead cow from Kitaf transported back to Jiddah for examination. Unfortunately the sun and Arabian delay did their work and the stench when the cow eventually arrived at its destination was reported remarkable even by local standards.

On the way back to Jiddah to file their stories, the journalists spent the night in the Najran customs house. Early in the morning they awoke to the sound of exploding bombs as the town was attacked by Egyptian planes. Fortunately the bombing was inaccurate, the only immediate casualties being two children. Several of the bombs did not explode on impact and a German television team rolled them into position to take the necessary pictures. The team, led by Walter Mechtel (who was later shot in Aden) learned afterwards that some of the bombs had been fitted with delayed action charges and later had exploded, killing two Saudi policemen.

Despite the press reports Egypt continued to stoutly deny the charges and a certain amount of doubt remained because of lack of reliable medical evidence. The final exposé was to be provided by Rochat.

In May 1967 reports reached Rochat, then in northern Yemen, of a gas attack in the Wadi Hiran, thirty miles east of the Republican-held capital of Sana. On 10 May, determined to verify the facts for once and for all, Rochat set out together with two Swiss doctors and an Italian journalist for the stricken area. On the second day of the journey the party camped for the night in the lower reaches of the Wadi. As was customary each of the vehicles carried prominent Red Cross insignia and, to make certain they could be easily identified from the air, a twelve-metre square red cross was laid out in the camping area. At 7.45 on the following morning Rochat, stretching his legs after breakfast, saw the first plane appear from behind the screen of mountains. His instinct warned him that something was wrong and with a cry of warning to his companions he dashed to the cover of a nearby grove. Guards, doctors and journalists were quick to follow but the head guard, Yahya Salih, stayed in the open gesticulating towards the enormous Red Cross flag on the ground. The plane had been joined by two others: they replied with a hail of machine-gun bullets. The guard fell to the ground, his blood spattering the flag. Four times the planes returned, machine-gunning and bombing: luckily there were no further casualties. It may be that the Egyptians believed they were attacking a disguised Royalist arms convoy but the Red Cross presence in the area was well known and they did have reason to fear what the doctors would discover on

the following day.

Rochat and his party proceeded to the scene of the gas attack and their investigation proved beyond all shadow of doubt that seventy-five tribesmen had been killed as a result of phosgene gas poisoning. The Committee of the International Red Cross in Geneva studied Rochat's reports and for the first time in its one hundred and four year history the Committee issued a public statement which indirectly accused the Egyptians of using gas, a form of warfare forbidden by the Geneva Convention to which the United Arab Republic is a signatory.

On his next visit to Cairo, Rochat personally protested about the attack on his convoy to the Egyptian Foreign Office and was understandably surprised when they blandly informed him that he must have been mistaken.

In all, the Egyptians are thought to have made over seventy gas attacks during their five-year occupation of the Yemen. The last known raid of this kind was on the Bani Qais, a tribe living some sixty miles due west of Sana, on the 17 June 1967, after the war with Israel.

After some political manoeuvring, the matter was brought to the notice of the United Nations by Saudi Arabia but was not thought worth debate. Similarly, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, engrossed in condemning American action in Vietnam, easily reconciled its conscience on gas by considering that this was an internal matter in which it could not interfere.

All classes of South Arabians were appalled by events in the Yemen. Nobody wanted the same thing to be repeated in their country. The United Nations enjoyed considerable prestige and everybody had looked forward to the visit of a United Nations' Mission which they were sure that if all else failed would bring a happy end to their troubles.

Chapter VI

This Month's Magicians

April 1967

It is outrageous, they are showing 'Bonanza' instead of our statement.

Keita of Mali

The bloody British have been responsible for more bloodshed in the world than anybody else.

Shalizi of Afghanistan

Towards the end of February 1967, Shaikh Muhammad Farid, the Foreign Minister, who was internationally the most presentable member of the Federal government, flew into London accompanied by Abdul Rahman Girgirah, the Minister of Information. Their aim was to try and persuade the British government that it was useless to fix a date for independence unless there were cast-iron guarantees for the protection of the new state.

By this time Girgirah was nearing the end of his tether. He was a firm believer in the Federal system and had taken part in the negotiations from the start. For nine long years he had borne the abuse of his fellow Adenis not to mention Cairo and Sana Radios and the pressure was steadily increasing. Two of his cousins, leading members of FLOSY, were actively plotting his assassination and family insistence that he leave South Arabia grew as threat succeeded threat. Slowly it became apparent to his colleagues in the Supreme Council that Girgirah would far rather be sent on missions abroad than sit in his Ministry at Steamer Point. The break was to come later, but for the present he was content to accompany Shaikh Muhammad on his talks with the Foreign Office and Members of Parliament. They were promised nothing in the way of material aid but were successful in compelling the British government to acknowledge that if South Arabia was to become independent by the end of the year, it was imperative to find a government for it. The only one available was the Federal government. Although the British regarded it as too narrow in its present state they felt at least it would form the nucleus of the future independent government.

South Arabia was becoming an increasing embarrassment to the British. British lives were being lost to no purpose; British diplomats castigated at the United Nations and British relations with the remainder of the Arab world unduly complicated by the issue. From 'the maintenance and



15 *Minister of State, George Thomson (the only Labour Minister to be trusted by the Arabs).*

security of the base' through to 'the intention to guide South Arabia to peaceful independence and leave behind a strong and stable government,' the aims of the British South Arabian policy had been abandoned one by one. By the time Farid and Girgirah arrived the aim was 'to get out as quickly as possible'.

On the 17 March George Thomson, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, was sent out to try and do a deal with the Federal government. Independence in November with the promise of air cover for six months afterwards. Thomson's visit came as a complete surprise to the Federal government.

He arrived on a Friday, the South Arabian rest day, so that many of the ministers had left for a weekend in their home states and heard the news on the BBC. They returned hurriedly to al Ittihad.

The Federal government were shocked by the proposals and the speed with which they were expected to decide. Shaikh Muhammad Farid complained 'You have come here without any warning and expect us in a few hours to make a decision of this importance which will profoundly affect the future of our country. Sir, this is not reasonable.' With this he accurately reflected the views of his colleagues. Despite his inauspicious start, Thomson made a great personal impact. He was the only Labour minister to meet the Federal government whom they actually liked. Afterwards several expressed the hope that he would be put in charge of their affairs. By the vigour of his personality Thomson kept the debate going until long into Saturday night but to no avail. The Federal

government sensed a weakening in the British attitude and felt that if they could hold out for longer then they would get more. Thomson went back empty handed.

During the Minister's visit the Federal government took the opportunity to make some proposals of their own. They demanded to be allowed to take over internal security in Aden State. As a colony the security was the responsibility of the High Commissioner as Governor of Aden. It was in the hands of the Aden Police and Armed Police, the latter an armed militia and riot squad supported by British troops who provided the main internal security force. The Federal government argued that in the vast majority of cases the British troops, although highly competent, neither knew the language nor the customs of the people with whom they were dealing. 'This', said the Federal government, 'is the chief reason for the lack of reliable intelligence. Arab troops know Arab people better than any Briton can ever hope to know them so let our Federal army begin to take over and put an end to this matter. With every day that passes the toll of terrorism and NLF/FLOSY influence increases, let us in before it is too late.'

For their part the British government believed there was every possibility the Federal army would use violently repressive measures, reports of which would do the British no good in the world at large. They did not, therefore, wish to remain in the picture once the Federalis moved in. This concern, the attempts by the British government to appease world opinion, was often in practical conflict with its efforts to leave behind a stable and friendly government. In the end neither of these objectives were achieved. The continual sacrifice of the second to conciliate the first was a major reason for the failure of Britain's policy in South Arabia.

The Federal government had yet another reason for wanting the Federal forces to get to grips with the militants on the streets of Aden. They were beginning to suspect the loyalties of several of the Federal army units and wanted to put the matter to test while there were still the British to rely on.

The Federal government also brought in the vexed question of the Eastern Aden Protectorate. In any debate with the Federal government, whenever the fateful words 'Eastern Aden Protectorate' were mentioned the whole conversation would veer into the land of make-believe. The High Commission sometimes felt that the Supreme Council primed a member to bring up the subject whenever agreement seemed about to be reached on some crucial matter.

The three Sultanates of Qaiti, Kathiri and Mahra, comprising two-thirds of the area and three-fifths of the population of South Arabia, had never been over enthusiastic about joining the Federation. The Hadhramis of Qaiti and Kathiri were an adventurous and talented people, far in advance of their brethren in the west. The people of Mahra on the other hand were primitive Bedouin, men of the vast deserts and barren mountains, descendants of an ancient people who held the land before the coming of the Arab. They spoke their own language and only accepted the rule of their Sultan Isa on the condition he kept to his island of Socotra and did not

set foot on the mainland. They were deeply suspicious of all foreigners and that meant anybody not hailing from their own barren soil.

All three states looked askance at the troubles of the Federation. They were conservative at the best of times and were not encouraged by what they saw. A typical Hadhrami attitude was succinctly expressed by 'Major General' bin Sumaidhia, head of the Qaiti Regular Army, during a visit to Aden in 1966. 'We have got three sultans ourselves and this is trouble enough; we don't want to inherit another seventeen.'

The 'Major General' had obtained his exalted rank through a mistake in translation. It was intended he be promoted Colonel. When the application for the new badges of rank were sent off to a military outfitters in London a misunderstanding arose over the translation of the Arabic word *liwa* and badges for a major general were sent back. Nobody had the heart to tell him and it did not matter really as he was the senior officer in any case. Even so, it caused quite a flurry during a subsequent tour of the United Kingdom.

The Qaitis, who were by far the largest of the three and whose territory totally enclosed that of Kathiri, had another motive for not wanting to join. The Pan American Oil Company were exploring for oil in the territory and the Qaitis feared that if they joined in some form of Federation they would have to share their oil revenues with everybody else: the other rulers were notoriously poor. In point of fact Pan American's activities were centred deep inside Mahra territory but this did not worry the Qaitis. They promptly claimed the land as their own.

The sea port of Mukalla was the capital and chief town of Qaiti. In 1967 a traveller arriving via the airport of Riyan faced a bumpy fourteen-mile Landrover journey across sand and rock before turning a bend in the cliffs to come suddenly upon one of the loveliest sights in all Arabia. The town, sited on a narrow strip nestling under towering brown cliffs, looked an oriental dream come true. Minarets and tall buildings which glistened white in the mid-day sun were offset by the deep blue expanse of the harbour with its majestic dhows and high prowed fishing boats. Only when the traveller got closer did the stench and corruption of the place rise up from the very streets.

The old palace, then the British Residency,* was set back in its own compound and built in the style of an old world country house in New England or Virginia. It was complete with nineteenth-century cannon, which the British seem to leave behind in abundance wherever they go. Opposite and by far the biggest building in the city stood the Ruler's palace. One of the last outpourings of Indian Gothic architecture in the classic style, its resemblance to an enormous iced cake was startling. On the top floor of this monstrosity the young Sultan Ghalib strived to come to grips with the problems of his realm and, when things became too much, played with his collection of swords. Sultan Ghalib was only nineteen and

* Visitors knew it as Dysentery Hall.



16 Sultan Ghalib of Qaiti

just back from an English public school where he obtained four 'A' levels. He never stood a chance.* His father, the Sultan Awadh, had died a few months before. A descendant of a long line of Yafai mercenaries, he had been born a spastic and developed hypochondria. The drugs used to cure his often non-existent illnesses turned him into an addict so that for the last decade of his reign he had been little more than a human vegetable and his power had passed into the hands of his wazir, Ahmad al Attas. Al Attas was a tall and imposing figure with powdered cheeks and painted lips; a malevolent influence in Qaiti affairs and a born intriguer in the pay of Egypt. He controlled the creaking machinery of Qaiti government from the Secretariat overlooking the harbour. Like many buildings in Mukalla it was white and imposing from the outside. Inside the layers of dust, piles of files and stains of human excrement in the corners told their own tale.

Under Al Attas the factions in the state multiplied. For several years the South Arabian League formed the chief opposition to the government. Gradually their influence declined under the impact of fresh waves of revolutionary ardour provided by the Arab Socialist Party and FLOSY who were busy organising taxi drivers and labourers into trades unions. By September 1966 all factions had combined to destroy the South Arabian League. On the 12 September a grenade exploded amongst a crowd, mainly school children, demonstrating outside the League offices in Mukalla. One schoolboy was blown to pieces and twenty other people injured. The grenade was thought to have been thrown by a South Arabian Leaguer. The

* He was assisted by his younger brother Umar who wanted to become a pilot. Umar was popular in the suq and had taken an early opportunity to impress his character on the community. At the age of four, given a tricycle by the British Resident he raced around Mukalla with a large Qaiti flag strapped to the handlebars. As he pedalled through the main gate the guard was obliged to turn out and present arms.

League was also a target for demonstrations at Sai'un, the capital of neighbouring Kathiri, where Abdulla Jabiri, a member of the League, was held on charges of firing shots at a crowd of demonstrators. The excuse was taken to round up all the leading members of the party and force them to stand trial. This trial dragged on for months as no-one wished to face the responsibility of passing sentences and in the meantime tension between the various factions increased.

The situation in the town was further complicated by an influx of some thousands of refugees from Zanzibar who could be seen hanging around the streets discontented and unemployed. The condition of the countryside was as bad. Two years of severe drought had had a devastating effect on the crops and herds of the tribesmen, many of whom were on the point of starvation and depended on supplies dropped by the Royal Air Force from Aden to keep alive.

In January 1967 a chieftain of the Saar, one of the great nomadic tribes of the desert, was on a rare trip to Mukalla to purchase supplies. Under the impression he was being cheated by a merchant in the market, a furious exchange ensued. 'By God,' he shouted, 'when the British and their aeroplanes have gone you shall pay for this thieving. We shall come and take what is rightfully ours and none shall hinder us.'

When asked what good would come of loot and plunder, the chieftain turned his wizened face, with its kohl-rimmed eyes and tufted beard, and cracked into a smile. 'Why then we shall be back to the sands and away for will we not be richer than before?'

Such was the Hadhramaut which the Federal government so much wanted to join; some would have said they had trouble enough.

Ever since he became Foreign Secretary, a major objective of George Brown's Middle East policy had been to re-establish diplomatic relations with Egypt. He was personally on good terms with President Nasser and in March wrote to him asking him to call off the terror campaign in South Arabia.

President Nasser must have smiled at George Brown's letters. He probably had neither the desire nor the ability to do as he was asked. He flatly turned down the request and the letters gave the Egyptians an opportunity of playing their favourite game of twisting the lion's tail at no cost to themselves. George Brown was undoubtedly sincere in these efforts to bring peace to South Arabia but in Aden his letters were regarded by the British as a humiliation and by the Arabs as a further sign of weakness.

George Brown had another card up his sleeve. After months of exhausting effort and debate a United Nations' Mission was on its way to South Arabia to solve the territory's problem. In retrospect the hope and importance which all parties attached to this Mission seems incredible. Its arrival in April was awaited with relief and expectancy.

The United Nations had interested itself in the affairs of Aden and South Arabia since 1962 and in May 1963 the Special Committee of 24 on Colonialism decided to send a Mission to investigate the problem. Sir

Patrick Dean, the British delegate in New York at the time, reaffirmed that it was the British intention to bring Aden to 'independence at the earliest possible date'. The British view then was that the Mission amounted to interference in Aden's domestic affairs. It was consequently refused admission to South Arabia. It went to Cairo instead. There it naturally obtained the most adverse picture of the British presence so that the Committee's subsequent report described conditions in the territory as 'dangerous' and 'likely to threaten international peace and security'. The report claimed that there was a stong desire of the people for union with the Yemen and called for elections on the basis of universal adult sufferage. It made the usual noises about British repression and the imprisonment of political prisoners. All this was duly denied by the British delegates but the General Assembly in its autumn session of 1963 approved the report and called for the early removal of all British forces. This was not accepted by the British who appeared to be intent on keeping their base or by the Federal government who wished to retain the British presence in some form or other.

On the other hand the Aden militants quickly appreciated the political possibilities and from 1963 onwards 'acceptance of the United Nations' Resolutions' became their parrot cry. During the period of Mackawee's premiership in Aden State 'United Nations' Resolution!' was his government's reply to any query concerning constitutional advance.

Gradually the British and Federal governments gave ground. After the announced British withdrawal from the base the main obstacle to acceptance was removed. On the 13 May 1966 the Federal government formally accepted the Resolution in the hope of bringing all the parties together. In turn, on the behalf of FLOSY, Mackawee announced the decision as 'a farce and a mockery'; terrorism continued.

Both FLOSY and the Federal government had sent delegations to the United Nations' autumn session of 1966. Apart from Mackawee the FLOSY delegation, the composition of which had been the subject of much squabbling in Taiz and Cairo, included Muhammad Salim Basindwah, the babyfaced henchman of Asnag, and Saif Ahmad al Dhalai of the NLF. When the time came for them to appear before the Committee of 24 they were one short as Basindwah had vanished into the depths of Harlem. The Federal government were represented by Shaikh Muhammad Farid and Hussain Bayumi, the courageous if muddleheaded brother of the founder of Aden's United National Party, who was serving as Federal Minister of Aviation.

Under the system of procedure adopted by the Committee of 24 the petitioners from the territory under discussion are heard first and questioned, then the matter is debated by the member countries.

Mackawee, suave as ever, said the usual things. He condemned the British, demanded the instant withdrawal of British troops, the release of the detainees and the removal of 'the Federal Sultanic and puppet government.'

Shaikh Muhammad and Bayumi had a cool reception. Bayumi in particular came under fire from several of the members. Eventually his formidable wife Adilla caused a minor stir and brought to light an odd practice. Wandering around behind the delegates as her husband was being questioned she noticed the Sudanese delegate reading a question from a piece of plain paper. Similar pieces of paper were in the possession of the Somali and other delegations. Being a down-to-earth no-nonsense woman she asked the Sudanese where he had got it. The diplomat replied that an Egyptian friend had asked him to put the question. A complaint was promptly registered with the Sudanese Ambassador and other pieces of paper quickly disappeared. Similarly, messages from state councils and South Arabian organisations in support of the Federal government and intended for circulation amongst the committee members somehow never got there. Later, when the British delegate complained, he was assured that there had been an administrative error which prevented their distribution.

The British also accepted the United Nations' Resolutions but with certain reservation concerning the State of Emergency. Their case was that they were quite prepared to raise the state of emergency and release all the detainees if and only if FLOSY, the NLF and the Egyptian government called off the terror campaign. Lord Caradon, the chief British delegate, reversed the earlier British objection to the United Nations' participation and called for a UN Mission to facilitate South Arabia's advance to independence. British policy towards the United Nations had changed because it was appreciated that by ensuring UN participation in the state-making process she also ensured international recognition of the new state and she hoped the United Nations would provide a focal point where the contending parties could meet without loss of face. They were to be quickly disillusioned on the success of the second of these aims. As soon as the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations had agreed in principle to send the Mission on 2 December 1966, Mackawee denounced the move as an 'Imperialist plot'. He and his backers realised that no fairminded mission would impose FLOSY as the sole representative of the people of South Arabia which was the Front's constantly-avowed claim. FLOSY also appreciated, as did all the Arabs, but the British and the United Nations did not, that no 'coalition' or 'broadly based' South Arabian government made up of the different parties would work. They would spend their energies destroying each other. Individuals could change sides but only a single party could rule.

FLOSY did not stop at merely denouncing the Mission. South Arabians were warned on pain of death not to contact it and Taiz Radio, which was FLOSY controlled, assured the Mission that they 'would not leave South Arabia alive' if they dared to set foot in Aden. The threat was probably made by an over-zealous announcer without the consent of Mackawee, Asnag or the Egyptians, but it nevertheless underlined the complete reversal of traditional FLOSY policy. The NLF, once again making a

separate appearance, followed the FLOSY line in as much as it totally prejudged the issue. They demanded the lifting of the State of Emergency, the release of political prisoners and an undertaking by the Mission that it would refuse to talk to anyone concerned with the Federal government before they would agree to meet the Mission.

Meanwhile U Thant was having difficulty in finding members for the Mission. After considerable debate and lobbying behind the scenes, it was finally decided it would be led by Dr Manuel Perez-Guerrero, head of the Venezuelan delegation, an intellectual with some knowledge of Arabic who had visited Aden *en route* for the Yemen in 1963. The members to be Abdul Sattar Shalizi, an Illinois-educated one-time Prime Minister of Afghanistan, and Mussa Leo Keita of Mali who was variously described by *The Observer* as 'gentle and studious', by a British diplomat trying to sell him to the Federal government as 'warming on acquaintance', and lastly by an American journalist over his bourbon on the rocks in the bar of Aden's Crescent Hotel as 'a raving red'. He was certainly strongly left wing and to most anti-British. The Federal government were not best pleased at the choice of a delegate from Mali who they thought would automatically side with the militants, but drew comfort from the fact that it was Keita who was coming and not Amadou Moltar Thiam who had made some vicious attacks on the Federal government in the past and was well known for his pro-Marxist views. They were considerably irritated therefore when it was announced that Thiam would act as Keita's understudy on the Mission in case the latter was called back for a session of the Security Council of which Mali was then a member. Apparently the appointment had been made by the United Nations' Secretariat without reference to the British delegation.

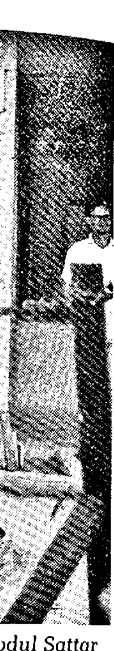
The portents for the Mission's success were gloomy, but the faith with which it was regarded by the South Arabian man in the street as a wizard which would cure all evils within the space of a few days was undiminished. For years the NLF, FLOSY and their predecessors had been calling for 'the implementation of the United Nations' Resolutions' and latterly the British and Federal governments had joined in too, so for the most part it was reasonable to assume that the troubles were almost over: they were to be disappointed. Even before the Mission left New York its task was made virtually impossible. Its terms of reference contradicted themselves for although the General Assembly were unanimous that the members should not go to Aden without pre-conditions for independence, at the same time it endorsed recommendations of the Committee of 24 on Colonialism which were wholely anti-British and anti-Federal. These terms of reference presented the three members of the Mission with an insurmountable problem and were a principal cause of the subsequent failure of their task. They described the Federal government as 'unrepresentative'. This meant that if the Mission stuck rigidly to its charter they would be unable to deal with the Federal government in any way. The problem was insurmountable. Technically if the Mission wanted to move out of Aden Colony then it could only do so with the sanction of



17 United Nations' Mission. Left to right: Mousa Leo Keita (Mali), Abdul Sattar Shiliza (Afghanistan) and Perez Guerrero (Venezuela).



18 The Headquarters of the UN Mission in Aden


...bdul Sattar

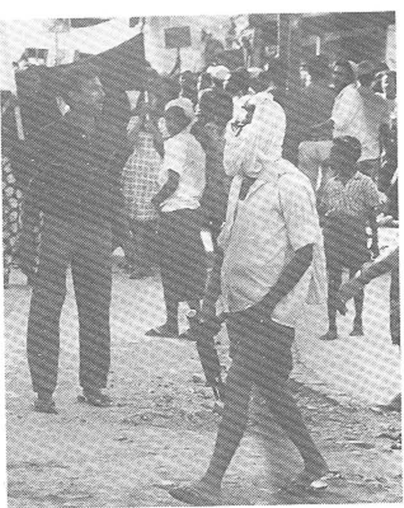
the Federal government. The use of a Federal army truck or escort or any Federal government facilities including the Aden-based radio station, would be tantamount to recognition of a government which by virtue of their brief the Mission had already condemned. The Federal government welcomed the Mission in the hope that once it arrived then it would treat the facts as they were and not as they were viewed from New York. They were to be sadly disappointed. The fact that the Mission was sent on these terms must go down as a defeat for British diplomacy and a government delighted to have made it with the United Nations on South Arabia at last was complacent enough to believe that everything could be sorted out on the ground.

In Aden preparations went ahead for the Mission's reception. The first problem of the High Commission was accommodation. For the purposes of neutrality, comfort and access, a hotel was the obvious choice. No hotel in Aden was desirous of the honour. The choice finally fell on the Seaview and the High Commissioner used his emergency powers to take it over from a pair of Italian restauranteurs who had recently moved in and were already famous for their mussels and spaghetti. The hotel was the largest building in the area, facing Khormaksar beach, well away from the trouble centres.

Because of the threats by FLOSY and the NLF security was taken seriously. The beach road was blocked off and a barbed wire compound soon encircled the building, a searchlight was mounted on the roof and the whole area was guarded by a contingent of the Aden Civil and Armed Police. The British services provided the cooks and catering services. Other than the fact that the Mission was interested in archaeology and ancient remains the High Commission was unable to find out much about them. There was some speculation concerning how long they intended to stay or what sort of programme they wished to undertake.

Assuming that the three diplomats wished to see as much of the country as possible a special committee produced a plan which took them into all the states of the Federation and the Eastern Aden Protectorate as well as Aden itself. It was a difficult administrative problem, not only due to the state of unrest but because it also involved the co-ordination of security arrangements in dozens of Arab towns and villages. Whilst the Committee went about its labours, others were planning a totally different kind of reception.

In the pink and blue *Plaza de Toro*-like structure that was the Aden Trades Union Congress headquarters, the mosques of Crater and the shacks of Shaikh Uthman, the young men of FLOSY were planning their most ambitious series of demonstrations and attacks to date. FLOSY was at the height of its power in Aden. The wave of popular support which followed the Mackawee murders had not yet spent itself. Moreover, the morale of the members had been strengthened by the emergence of armed force which had begun to make its appearance in the streets. The People's Organisation of Revolutionary Forces (PORF) had been formed by the



19 The funeral of a FLOSY guerilla gunned down by the rival NLF. FLOSY's habit of giving elaborate funerals to their supporters allowed their rivals to identify their next target.

Egyptians as the militant wing of FLOSY. It was directly supervised, paid and trained by Egyptian Intelligence officers from a special barracks at Salah, the Imam's former palace, fourteen miles from Taiz.

The Egyptians had formed the new organisation for a variety of reasons. They had always aimed to produce a Liberation Army on the lines of the Algerian FLN and to this end cadres of South Arabians had been receiving military training, not only in the Yemen but Egypt as well. It was hoped that these men would prove a unifying force for the discordant revolutionary groups and by the beginning of 1967 a protection for FLOSY members against their more ruthless NLF rivals. Lastly and by no means least, the Egyptians had despaired of distributing arms through the political heads of either FLOSY or the NLF. Mackawee always seemed to distribute them to the wrong people and Qahtan al Shaabi had been locked up more than once on the suspicion of selling them on the side. The Egyptians soon appreciated an old proverb well understood by their British counterparts—'You cannot bribe a man of the South, only hire him for the afternoon.' Arms were still given direct and in liberal quantities to both organisations but the main effort was steadily diverted to PORF.

The NLF saw PORF as a direct threat to their survival and the outbreak of interfront killings which began in the first weeks of April was sparked off by a PORF attempt to encroach into their preserves.

The Mission duly arrived in London on the 10 March and after what were officially described as 'useful talks' and a round of clock golf with George Brown it headed for Cairo where it arrived on the 25th. The Egyptian

government were in a quandary. They had voted for the Mission to visit South Arabia, yet at the same time had encouraged FLOSY to boycott it. Even during the Mission's visit to the Egyptian capital, 'Voice of the Arab' and other Egyptian-controlled radio stations were calling on the faithful to boycott its activities. Nevertheless, with an admirable disregard for the facts, the Egyptians suavely expressed regret for the FLOSY attitude and blamed it all onto the British. Some unconfirmed reports state that contact was made between the Mission and Mackawee and the fact remains that after their visit to Cairo until their final report on the eve of independence, the members appeared to be solidly pro-FLOSY.

From Cairo they journeyed on to Jiddah where the Saudi Arabians assured them it was all the fault of the Egyptians. Here the Mission met its first South Arabians. The South Arabian League had strong support amongst the Hadhrami merchant community of Saudi Arabia and a delegation of these presented a petition. Another figure who, rather surprisingly, appeared on the scene was Abdul Rahman Girgirah. In his position as President of the United National Party he was clutching a sheaf of his organisation's views on the problem, a copy of which was sent to the Mission although its arrival was never confirmed.

In Aden things were warming up. The main trouble centres were as ever Shaikh Uthman and Crater but PORF had commenced its assault with an attack on al Ittihad, the Federal capital. The weapon used was a curious contraption which became known as a 'drainpipe mortar'. It consisted of a five-foot length of ordinary drainpipe, blocked off at the base end and containing a mortar bomb. The open end of the pipe was then aimed at the target and a simple timing device detonated the charge which sent the bomb on its way at the appointed time long after the crew had disappeared. Although ingenious the 'mortars' were usually a failure. Often the timing device failed to detonate the bomb and even when it did, the bomb rarely hit the target. However, this attack on al Ittihad achieved its object.

On the 30 March two batteries of six drainpipes were lined up under cover of sand dunes facing the white box-like residences of Federal ministers. At around twelve midnight they went off, the bombs falling around the houses of Abdul Rahman Girgirah and Muhammad Hasan Obali. Little material damage was done and nobody was injured but for Girgirah it was the last straw. Terrified, his wife implored him to leave and he consented, departing for Jiddah the following day. It was the end of a long career. Never again would Girgirah play a meaningful part in South Arabian politics. The first crack had appeared in the facade of the Federal government. The attack had quite a different effect on Obali, who, late as the hour was, rang up his friends all over Aden to recount the details of something he appeared to regard as a joke. On the following morning he found his five-year-old daughter playing with the bomb which had fallen on the roof and only half exploded. This he proudly placed on the mantelpiece and it was only with some difficulty that a bomb disposal squad persuaded him to part with it.



20 The Lancashires struggle through the flood

1 April was the eve of the Mission's arrival in Aden. The militants made their final preparations, the British troops in the streets looked to their guns, the High Commission had a last look at their schedules, the Federal government and others to their petitions. God had a surprise for everyone.

For more than anything else Aden is a byeword for heat, barrenness and lack of rainfall which, even in a good year, seldom exceeds an inch. Early on the morning of 1 April it started to rain heavily and to the astonishment of all, the shower continued unabated for six hours. Aden was not geared for this sort of thing. There are no proper drainage facilities and soon the streets were under two and three feet of water. Worst hit were Crater, Maalla and Steamer Point where the water, streaming off the hills, swept aside the packing case shacks that housed thousands of immigrant Yemeni and Somali labourers. In Crater the torrent was so fierce that dozens of cars were piled one against the other in the narrow streets and cul-de-sacs. In Steamer Point the RAF used canoes to cross the lake which on the previous day had been their cricket pitch. Normal activity quickly squelched to a stop. Few people attempted to get to work and most who did were forced to abandon their cars on the way. For Arab and Briton alike thoughts of riot and insurrection were forgotten as they struggled to dry themselves out and clear up the mess.



21 General demonstrations against the UN Mission took place throughout Aden

Perhaps the only man who was thoroughly pleased with the turn of events was an old Indian in Steamer Point who stood up to his knees in water happily telling tales of Aden's last visitation in 1943 and proudly holding aloft the umbrella he had prudently bought after it.

The following day, as Aden concentrated on getting back to normal, the Mission slipped in almost unnoticed. The next morning they had what was to be their first and only formal meeting with the High Commissioner. It quickly became apparent that the Mission's approach to the problem was very different from the High Commissioner's. The first casualty was the programme which the Mission would not even discuss. Further, they refused to deal with the Federal government except through the High Commissioner and turned down flat a suggestion that they should meet Federal ministers and other leading South Arabians informally over lunch. Instead they elected to return to the Seaview to discuss matters between themselves and promptly vanished for two days. Press enquiries and, more important, Arab petitioners were brusquely turned aside. The Federal government received no acknowledgement to a letter of welcome and this was later found, together with several other letters setting out Federal policy and a copy of the ill-fated Hone and Bell report, in the hotel bathroom.

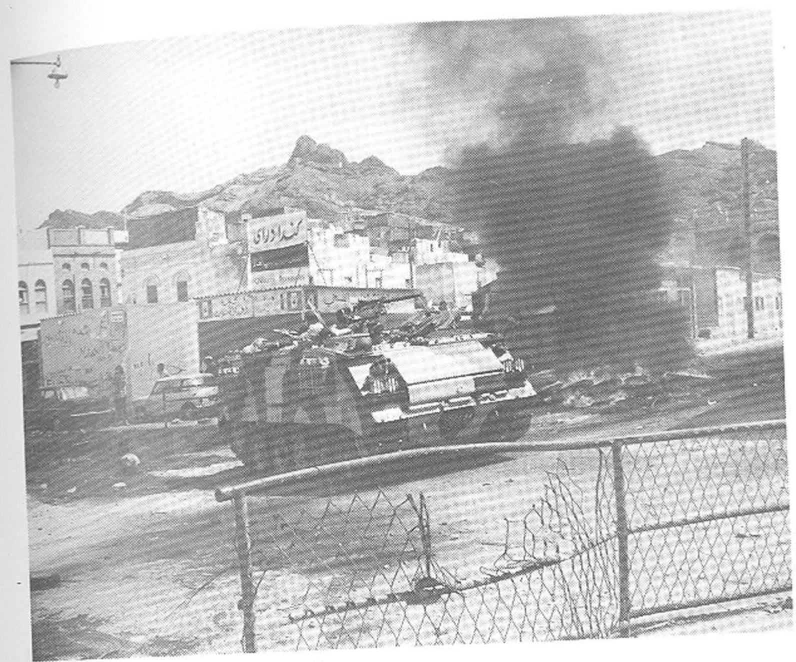
Meanwhile the Mission grappled with the problem of fitting its conflicting terms of reference to the realities of the situation. Their knowledge of both the geography and the current situation in the territory appeared skimpy. Shalizi, who liked lemon in his tea but did not approve of the lemon provided, asked the caterer to go out and buy some more. On learning there was a general strike in progress he told the cook to use his initiative and 'take a five-minute drive to the next town'. The next town was either Lahej, thirty miles away, or Zingibar, forty-five miles up the beach and which some of the UN staff who accompanied the Mission insisted on calling Zanzibar with resultant confusion.

Sir Richard Turnbull, suspecting that the bill of fare at the Seaview was not all that it might be, sent down a hamper of luxuries together with champagne and fresh lime. This was indignantly rejected by Shalizi who seemed to think it was a bribe and the wine a studied insult to his Muslim faith. An offer of a boat trip around Aden Harbour was similarly turned down on the grounds that the Mission was 'not interested in Aden's economy'. The lack of a common language added to the Mission's difficulty. Keita spoke excellent French but little English, Shalizi spoke good English but little French; Perez-Guerrero spoke a bit of both. For two days the Mission studied the problem, their sole relief being a film show provided by the Army Information Team.

Outside in the streets the battle was raging. The main trouble centres were Crater and Shaikh Uthman. The militants, their plans disorganised and their spirits dampened by the rain, took two days to get into swing. FLOSY was at the height of its power in Aden and this was to be its big effort against both the British and the recalcitrant NLF. In the event it was the NLF who struck first. After a clash between their supporters in Crater, two FLOSY men were found riddled with bullets in a back street.

The battle between the two fronts which had been going on intermittently since the 16 March broke out with renewed vigour. The funerals which FLOSY supplied for the dead provided the NLF with an opportunity to identify their enemies. There was a murder a day as supporters of the rival organisations pursued their vendetta. Generally, FLOSY had the worst of it. Salim al Amudi, father-in-law of Muhammad Salim Basindwah, was shot and died in hospital. Abdul Rahmin Qassim, a former minister in Mackawee's Aden government, a top FLOSY man and senior executive of Aden Airways, was gunned down as he returned home from visiting the dying Amudi.

Crater was essentially the FLOSY stronghold. By Monday the 3 April crowds of its supporters were out demonstrating, tearing up the water mains and burning piles of tyres in the streets so that a black pall of smoke hung over the town. FLOSY command intended to use the crowds as a bait to draw the British troops so they could be attacked with grenades, unable to fire back at their assailants from fear of injuring unarmed demonstrators. The troops involved, Northumberland Fusiliers led by their outspoken Lt Colonel Blenkinsop, learnt quickly and refused to be drawn. Several FLOSY



22 *British troops in action in Crater*



23 *A gunman wounded in exchanges with the Northumberland Fusiliers is taken to hospital*



24 *The use of burning tyres was common throughout the Emergency*



25 *The discipline and restraint of British troops faced with demonstrations and provocation was universally admired. The Lancashires are seen here in Crater.*

attacks backfired and the grenades fell amongst their own people, on one occasion injuring nine.

The discipline of the British troops at this time won a great deal of praise from the press who were in Aden in large numbers. Leading articles in several newspapers pointed out that few armies can match the British for internal security drill. In the Aden context discipline came into its own and the soldiers held steady under extreme provocation. The press were particularly impressed because many of them had just witnessed French reaction in similar circumstances. In Djibouti, the capital of the French Somaliland opposite Aden on the other side of the Red Sea, the Somalis had been rioting. On 30 March French Legionnaires advanced into the streets and opened fire on the crowds, killing eighteen rioters. The ruthlessness of their action shocked many correspondents although the French are wont to point out that there were no more riots in Djibouti.

Although they made a lot of noise, FLOSY attacks were rarely pressed home with vigour. Most of their 'commandos' were young and inexperienced and the better-trained concentrated its efforts on the NLF. As a result grenades were often thrown at a point which afforded the greatest safety to the attacker than danger to the target. Young men would rush into houses, threaten the occupants and fire a few shots blindly into the street and then rush out again. Five grenades thrown in the Crater Market Place between 10.50 am and 11.00 am on the 3 April did no harm, the only casualty being a discomforted press man who flung himself into a bath of fish and was studiously avoided by his colleagues for several days afterwards. These FLOSY tactics produced a record number of incidents, 1,078 during the period of the Mission's five-day stay, but only seventeen soldiers were slightly wounded as a result. After the 4 April the disturbances in Crater died down and the trouble centre transferred to the dusty desert town of Shaikh Uthman on the other side of the Colony, where something of a takeover bid was in progress.

In the meantime the Mission had come to a decision. At around mid-day on the 5 April they informed the High Commission that they wished to visit the al Mansura Jail, which at this time held one hundred and twelve detainees. The arrangements were duly made and at about 5 pm three cars flying UN flags and escorted by Aden Civil Police arrived outside the prison gates. The sound of firing from nearby Shaikh Uthman could be heard in the distance. The inside of al Mansura was arranged in five one-storey blocks. Each block was built in the shape of a hollow square and surrounded by wire. As soon as the three diplomats arrived in the prison the detainees crowded to the wire and began howling abuse and obscenities, having been ordered by their parent organisations to have nothing to do with the United Nations. The diplomats, whose knowledge of the local idiom was weak, were under the impression that this was some form of joyous Arabian welcome and advanced accordingly, waving with dignity to the detainees on either side. Rifai, their pleasant Syrian interpreter, quickly disillusioned them and the three men retreated into a

hurt huddle.

Appeals to the detainees to come forward and present their views only brought forth further invective. The detainees were beginning to enjoy themselves and were encouraged by the sound of firing which was drawing ever nearer the prison gates. Eventually to their delight the 'camp idiot' announced that he was prepared to address himself to the Mission. After much palaver a sack was placed over his head to conceal his identity and he was led to the three men. What he said and whether they gained any benefit from it remains a mystery, although later the Mission claimed to have interviewed a member of FLOSY. A grenade exploded four hundred yards down the road and men of the Anglian Regiment guarding the prison were coming under increasing fire. In such circumstances it was decided to lift the Mission out by helicopter. A Wessex arrived. The Mission climbed aboard and were fired on as the aircraft flew over the prison. The Mission appeared to have been badly shaken by their experiences but their only recorded comment was that they 'would not fly in the machine again' since they said it was smelly and had poor vision through its windows.

As the United Nations' Mission was leaving al Mansura the fighting in Shaikh Uthman was reaching its height. All day the Anglians, supported by armoured cars, had been rooting out snipers. By early evening all resistance was over except for a pocket holding out in the Al Nur mosque. Under the rules, mosques could not be searched or attacked by British troops whose infidel presence in the holy places would have given offence to the Muslim population and provided ammunution for Cairo propaganda. Federal Army troops were therefore called in to clear the mosque and a company arrived from the nearby Lake Lines training camp. Without any hesitation the Arab troops raced to their positions and in a few moments had assaulted and occupied the mosque. The defenders escaped over the back wall. Keen observers noted that as the Federal troops approached the white walls the firing died away and there were no casualties.

When the Mission had had their meeting with the High Commission they had asked that broadcasting facilities be arranged for them. Sir Richard explained that the local Arabic radio and television station, the South Arabian Broadcasting Service, was under the control of the Federal government but foresaw no difficulty. Their first communique, a bare statement of arrival, was broadcast the same day. On their return from al Mansura the Mission let it be known that they wished to address 'the people of Aden and South Arabia' on the following day. A British television camera team and a representative of the High Commission and Federal Ministry of National Guidance were told to report to the Seaview at 9.30 am to record the statement, but it was not until 12.30 pm that the Mission eventually appeared and delivered their statement. The tape was then taken to Husain Bayumi, the Federal minister concerned, with a request that it be broadcast at 8 pm that night. For the moment Bayumi did nothing. Later in the afternoon, when joined by Obali and Naiqa, the three

ministers played the tape. Already upset at the lack of acknowledgement to their letters and the fact that the request for broadcasting had been made through the High Commission, they were deeply outraged by what they heard. Obali, realising that the British would try to bring pressure to bear to force its broadcast, took the tape off to al Ittihad and hid it under a cushion.

It is interesting to study the statement because it reflects the Mission's difficulty with their terms of reference which endorsed the Committee of 24 on Colonialism calling for the 'abolition of the puppet Federal Government'. After giving the United Nations' background to the Mission's task the statement went on: 'In the territory we have been in touch with the High Commissioner and his staff as representatives of the United Kingdom which is responsible to the United Nations as the administering power. It is with them that we will deal officially in the territory and not with the Federal Government. We insist on having assurance from the administering power that we will have full opportunity of free and unimpeded contacts with representatives of all shades of opinion. It is in this manner and only so that the Mission will be able to discharge its responsibility. To this end the Mission has let it be known by Press and Radio and we repeat it here that we would like to encourage anyone who wishes to get in touch with the Mission to do so. . . .'

The statement went on 'Our visit yesterday to detainees at al Mansura was another reminder of how important it is for this country to be liberated from colonial rule. Once this goal has been achieved the energies of this young people and their brothers outside the prison walls will be available to build up their own independent country in unity and peace. . . .'

On the first point the Federal government felt that to broadcast this would clearly reveal them as 'the puppets of the British' that the United Nations claimed they were. It would be a clear admission that they had no power of their own and would completely undermine their authority. They also regarded the Mission's call for all shades of opinion to come forward as blatantly insincere.

Ever since the Mission had arrived in Aden, Federal ministers, supporters of the Federal government and representatives of various moderate parties still in existence such as the South Arabian League and the United National Party, had been ringing up the Seaview to obtain a hearing and had been rudely turned away.

On the second point, the Federal government felt this was clear encouragement to FLOSY and the NLF with whom they were engaged in a fight for survival. The 'energies of those outside the prison walls' was presumably a reference to the terrorists who were daily trying to kill British and Federal troops and their supporters. Lastly the Federal government noted that there was no appeal for an end to the violence which had brought the territory to a virtual state of civil war and had seriously impaired the Mission's own chances of success.

Only in the late afternoon did the High Commission learn of the Federal government's intention. Desperate efforts and telephone calls were made

to regain the tape but it was too late. Obali had it hidden under the purple and gold cushions on his sofa. Back in the Seaview the Mission had settled down in front of the television waiting for themselves to appear. At 8 pm a notice appeared on the screen to the effect that this was the Federal Television Station and any announcement on it could only be made with the consent of the Federal government, then the programmes continued with a popular cowboy serial. The three members of the Mission were furious. They regarded the affront as a deliberate plot by the British to force them to deal with the Federal government and have never accepted any other explanation. They pointed out correctly that nobody had bothered to inform them of the trouble although on the other hand Obali later claimed to have tried to contact them by telephone three times but had had the receiver slammed down on him on each occasion as soon as he revealed his identity. Very shortly after the non-broadcast they decided to pack their bags and leave. On the following morning they received a telegram from U Thant telling them to remain and Sir Richard Turnbull expressed his regret at the decision, but they remained obdurate. Later at a press conference in Geneva on the 10 April, Perez-Guerrero stated 'nobody had prevailed upon them to stay' and complained that the security restrictions had effectively cut them off from the people. In reply to a question as to why they did not see the Federal government 'as one of the varying shades of opinion' he recalled that the United Nations' Resolution had described this government as 'unrepresentative' and added that it would therefore 'have run counter to the Resolution if the Mission had had any official contacts with the Federal Government'. 'The Mission had had discussions with the South Arabian League representatives in both Cairo and Jiddah but in Aden the position was different.'

The Mission issued no statement about its impending departure but the news had quickly leaked out so that as they left the hotel they were forced to give an impromptu press conference to about fifty correspondents gathered outside. The three diplomats, who had already struck a new low in the art of public relations, attempted to fob off their questions with a few photographs and a bald statement of departure. Then matters were made more difficult by an unexpected intervention.

Ever since the Aden Airways explosion the previous autumn the Royal Air Force had tightened up security. No passenger was allowed to board an aircraft without having his baggage thoroughly searched. Because of the suddenness of the Mission's departure, this procedure had not been explained and a squad of RAF Police turned up to search the Mission's baggage in private at the hotel. For a moment Guerrero looked as if he would comply but his two more volatile companions soon made it plain that they considered it an insult that the suggestion had ever been thought of, let alone applied to them. Keita pointed out that in any case the British would look foolish if something had been placed amongst the luggage. Shalizi declaimed that if his suitcase was touched 'then the baggage of the British Ambassador in Afghanistan would be searched seven days a week.'

By this time the press had caught on and began crowding around asking questions. This infuriated Shalizi, who blamed them for the Mission's lack of success, and sitting firmly on his suitcase he stated that the search brought into question his honour as a diplomat. The RAF NCO in charge, irritated at suddenly finding himself in the front line of a diplomatic incident and secure in his regulations, took this opportunity to interrupt: he told the Afghan that his honour was risking the lives of one hundred and thirty people. 'My honour, my honour above all,' was the response.

This was too much for the press who had been watching proceedings with angry delight: even to those who had observed United Nations' antics in the Congo this was to be something of a collector's piece.

'Sod your honour,' a voice shouted. 'It's not only my honour but my principles are also at stake,' retorted Shalizi. 'F... your principles,' the same voice came back. Then followed a heated exchange in which some very unkind things were said about Venezuela, Mali and Afghanistan and Mr Shalizi let himself go with some equally unkind remarks about the United Kingdom.

'Can we quote you?' howled the press.

'Yes you bloody well can!' bellowed Shalizi, and quote him they did. For the first and perhaps only time in his life the Afghan made world headlines, destroying completely the assertion that the Mission was or had at any time been impartial.

Up to this point, Keita had appeared to be enjoying himself but now with a flourish of his leopard skin briefcase he entered the arena.

'I am not a terrorist,' he announced with dignity.

'Well you look like one,' somebody told him.

Pandemonium broke out, but suddenly everybody realised that things had gone far enough.

A considerably embarrassed Guerrero stepped in. The baggage was searched and the other hundred or so passengers who had spent ninety minutes sweltering in their seats on Khormaksar airfield were relieved to hear that the three were finally on their way.

The Mission stopped off in Rome to pour out their troubles to U Thant and then to Geneva for further brushes with the press and a return to comparative obscurity.

Chapter VII

Change at the Top

May-June 1967

Not only have we every confidence in Sir Richard but we also have a profound admiration for him.

Lord Shackleton
Aden, 13 April 1967

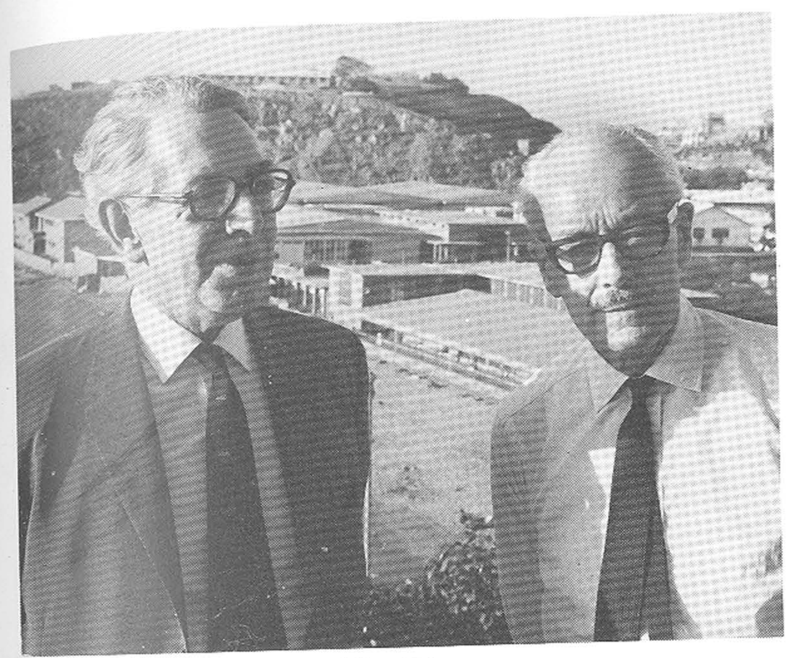
The echoes of the United Nations' debacle resounded through the corridors of Whitehall. George Brown, the Foreign Secretary, quickly denied allegations by the Mission that British non-co-operation had led to it failing its task and tried to placate the members when the Mission arrived in London on a second visit. Quite obviously something was wrong with Britain's South Arabian policy. The Cabinet acted immediately and appointed Lord Shackleton, a senior Labour peer and son of the Arctic explorer, Minister with special responsibility for South Arabia.

The concern of the Cabinet was reflected in subsequent exchanges in Parliament. George Brown informed a crowded House that he was puzzled by rumours of British non-co-operation.

Philip Noel Baker sprung to the defence of the Mission. 'Who', he demanded, 'launched the lying rumours which were deliberately designed to make the Mission look anti-British and ridiculous?' He then called for a complete reappraisal of the situation and consultations with all parties, including FLOSY.

The Foreign Secretary, who at this time had not seen the Mission since their trip to Aden, could only repeat the bare facts of departure. He acknowledged that the United Nations' Resolutions prevented the Mission from dealing with the Federal government and that this had given rise to some difficulty even before they had ever set foot in Aden. The Foreign Secretary went out of his way to affirm confidence in Sir Richard Turnbull and his staff and at the same time announced the departure of Lord Shackleton.

For the Conservative opposition, Sir Alec Douglas Home also paid tribute to the High Commissioner but pressed for Lord Shackleton's terms of reference. George Brown seemed unwilling or unable to give them. He stressed the need for having a senior minister on the spot to improve communications with the government and confirmed his confidence in the High Commissioner. Yet it was clear to all that Shackleton's appointment



26 Sir Richard Turnbull with Lord Shackleton

was an affront to the High Commissioner. At the very least it suggested that the Cabinet considered that Sir Richard could not cope on his own any longer. It also made things very difficult for him. He would be obliged to let Shackleton make all the decisions although he would still bear the responsibility for the results. It was explained that Shackleton's appointment was on the same lines as Macmillan's mission to Algeria during the Second World War, although this did little to dispel speculation that the Cabinet was unhappy about its High Commissioner and particularly his handling of the Mission. Sir Richard could have countered but didn't, that the blame if any lay with Lord Caradon and the British Delegation at the United Nations who had foisted upon him a mission whose charter was unworkable and whose members impossible. A scapegoat had to be found for the fiasco and there was not much doubt as to who it was going to be.

Not unnaturally rumours about the future of the High Commissioner began to appear in the press. Reports of impending resignation were firmly rebutted by the Foreign Office shortly after the Mission had departed. Sir Richard himself never considered it; he considered that he was the best man for the job and that it was his duty to soldier on. Both Lord Shackleton and George Brown in their public statements encouraged him to believe that the government at home still had every confidence in him. Just the

same, whispers that all was not well continued to circulate.

Personally Sir Richard had nothing to gain by continuing in office except added lustre to an already distinguished career. A tall benign fifty-eight, as a colonial administrator he had played a major role in crushing the Mau Mau. Later as governor in Tanganika he had guided that country to successful independence. In South Arabia the task was more difficult. He had the complex job of holding the ring whilst the government decided whether it wanted to support the Federal government or not, to crush terrorism without the political backing which might have enabled him to do it effectively and to bring to the conference table militants who plainly would not come.

To the outside world the High Commissioner wore his troubles lightly. He relaxed by going for long treks over Aden's hills and by teaching his parrot the Lord's Prayer. Sir Richard had his own particular brand of humour which may not have been appreciated or even understood by his political masters in London.

Shackleton wasted little time. He gathered together a team of civil servants led by Samuel Falle, an Arabist specially borrowed from the High Commission in Malaysia and arrived in Aden on 12 April. From their headquarters in the 'Princess Alexandra' suite at Government House 'the team' as it became known, set about trying to contact and assess the various South Arabian parties who were struggling for power.

Shackleton was not the only British emissary to appear in Aden at around this time. That stormy petrel of politics and outspoken critic of the Federal government, Tom Driberg, MP for Barking, had preceded him by a fortnight. As a socialist he has espoused common cause with socialists the world over and in the case of South Arabia the party he had chosen to support was FLOSY. Presumably with at least the unofficial blessing of the Foreign Secretary he set out tó contact Abdullah al Asnag in the guise of a reporter of the *Evening Standard*. Arriving in Aden via Khartoum where he made contact with 'Grenadier' Khalifa he was soon to be seen in the company of FLOSY personalities. The High Commission knew nothing of his arrival until he was found in a bar by a political officer on the day of the Mission's departure. Using his FLOSY contacts Driberg made the trip to Taiz and saw al Asnag. According to Hussain Bawazir, a leading FLOSY commando and Trades Union leader, who escorted him, the conversations were brief. What astonished Bawazir most of all was the aplomb with which the Member of Parliament had driven with armed 'commandos' through road blocks manned by British troops. Nothing seems to have come of the visit and Driberg contented himself with an article and speculation on the future of the High Commissioner.

When he arrived in South Arabia Lord Shackleton may have shared Driberg's views on FLOSY, but he had gone to South Arabia with an open mind and as he and his team pursued their inquiries they slowly came to the reluctant conclusion that the High Commission were right after all.



27 British soldier guards wreckage of the Bilqis school bus blown up on a FLOSY mine killing 6 and injuring 27.

The general calibre of the Federal government appalled most visitors but as one High Commission official, paraphrasing a famous remark, pointed out, 'The Federal government are no great shakes but they are the best government we've got.' There was nobody to take the places of the Federal ministers who, together with their advisers, pressed their case hard. Both militant organisations, FLOSY and the NLF, had taken up extreme positions and would only negotiate if everybody else was left out.

Taiz Radio underlined the militants' position. 'FLOSY refuses to hold any official or unofficial talks with the British Government unless the puppet South Arabian Federal Government is abolished, British occupation forces pulled out and FLOSY recognised as the only representative organ of the people in the South.' This moved Lord Shackleton to reply, 'It's time we stopped exchanging remarks at long range.'

FLOSY was also losing the battle with the NLF. Further, Shackleton's investigators soon exploded the myth that Asnag was all-powerful in the Aden trades union movement. One by one the Aden trades unions had broken away from the FLOSY-dominated Aden Trades Union Congress. They elected their own leaders and declared for the NLF. This was not

because they necessarily supported the NLF, most had only the vaguest idea of its organisation. The reason was, it provided a revolutionary alternatve to Asnag. FLOSY was also losing popularity among the ordinary Adenis.

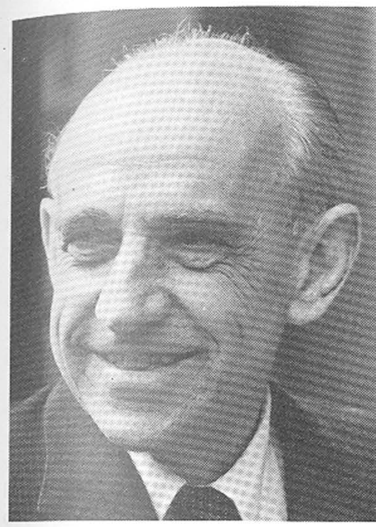
On the 29 April seven children were killed and thirteen others injured when their school taxis exploded on a mine. It had been laid on a dirt track near the Federal army training camp at Lake Lines in Shaikh Uthman and may have been intended for British observation vehicles that often parked near the spot.

The crime was loudly denounced by FLOSY. Kurmarianos, an Egyptian Greek who was running the Taiz Radio English Service, accused the British, pinpointing an official in the High Commission as the man responsible. Few believed the fiction, certainly not the womenfolk searching the wreckage for the satchels and plimsoles of their children. One of these, contorted with grief, began to tear at her clothes, screaming curses at FLOSY and the Egyptians before being led sobbing from the scene by her family. This mine incident, which took place in 'FLOSY territory', highlighted the indiscriminate nature of terrorism.

Similarly, out of Aden in the Protectorates, traditional enemies of the rulers and other dissidents all tended to support the NLF because FLOSY was becoming more and more identified with the urban Adenis. The old rivalry was asserting itself. Tribesmen would take arms and money from FLOSY but resented any attempt at control. The NLF, with most of its leaders under house arrest in Cairo, made little attempt to do so. This appealed to the independent tribal spririt so they called themselves NLF. NLF stood for complete change but had no visible leaders and few spokesmen. Nobody, whether it was Qahtan al Shaabi in his Cairo villa, the union leaders in Aden or the tribal rebels, realised the full extent of its power or the magic of its name. Because of its lack of organisation it was impossible for the British, FLOSY or the Federal government to crush. It was also impossible to contact the NLF as there was nobody with the authority to speak on its behalf. Gradually a brotherhood was born. The success of the Aden branch against FLOSY earnt the NLF considerable prestige in the Colony and support for it grew steadily.

On 7 May Shackleton, Turnbull and Caradon arrived in London for talks at the Foreign Office concerning the role Britain wanted the United Nations to play. The three-man mission was at last reported to have told Britain the terms under which it would return to Aden. The same day the leaders of FLOSY and the NLF were reported in Cairo ironing out their differences. The Mission never returned, the differences were never ironed out but, even as he reached London Airport, Sir Richard's fate had been finally decided.

There are various versions of how Sir Richard was dismissed. George Brown gave his in an article in *The Sunday Times* on 7 April 1968. 'At another point in the Aden saga when I felt that I had to make the switch from Sir Richard Turnbull, the very distinguished Governor of Aden, to Sir



28 Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, Britain's last High Commissioner in South Arabia

Humphrey Trevelyan, I doubt that it could have been done as easily in any other atmosphere. One of the most painful things that I ever had to do was to tell Sir Richard that I had decided to make the change. I remember telling him over the side of the fire, over a very relaxed drink, after he had clearly come to tell me how successful he was. He left the room nobly, whereas he and I know that he must have been the most disappointed, perhaps the most stunned man on earth. I then called Trevelyan in round the same fire...'

This is a curious story as even the Foreign Secretary must have known that the news had already been leaked and the newspapers were full of rumours. When the Foreign Secretary eventually made his statement to the House of Commons he 'very much regretted the leaks'.

There was considerable sympathy in Aden for the High Commissioner and anger at the summary fashion in which he had been treated. On Sir Richard's return from London he was met by all heads of department and the Service Chiefs who turned up at the airport to greet him in a gesture of support.

The only reason George Brown ever gave for dismissing Sir Richard was that he was replacing an administrator with a diplomat. In Sir Humphrey Trevelyan he had a diplomat *par excellence*. Early in his career his small stature and prominent ears earned Sir Humphrey the sobriquet of 'Jumbo'. He had crossed swords to advantage with both President Nasser and Khruschev when holding the posts of British Ambassador in Cairo and Moscow. There was nothing vacillating about Sir Humphrey. He made up his mind quickly and decisively. Moreover, he possessed an uncanny

diplomatic sixth sense which enabled him to forecast the trend of events and adjust his mood to that of the people with whom he dealt. These qualities quickly won him the confidence of his staff.

On arrival in Aden Sir Humphrey called for the formation of a 'central caretaker government, broad based and representing the whole of South Arabia'. To this end he proclaimed himself ready to talk with any South Arabian party. He added 'It is clearly necessary that all violence should stop, it is intolerable that all efforts to make progress towards independence should be threatened by a handful of people acting in a way totally opposed to the true interests of South Arabia.' This was a clear invitation for the militants to come forward. There was no response. This utter lack of co-operation on behalf of the militants was a further factor which helped persuade Lord Shackleton to support the Federal government; another was the Arabs' June war with Israel.

Only people who have lived amongst the Arabs can really appreciate the intensity of emotion with which they regard the problem of Palestine. Over the years it has become more than just a question of 'occupied' land. For centuries Jews have lived amongst Arabs and have generally been treated as an inferior race. The very existence of Israel is not only an affront to Arab self-respect but is regarded by them as a slur on Arab manhood. Every subsequent defeat only intensifies the feeling. Jews were seen as merchants and artisans, rarely soldiers, a community useful as a source of wealth and skill.

The opening moves of the crisis, the withdrawal of the United Nations' troops, the Egyptian occupation of Sharm al Shaikh and the closing of the Straits of Tiran, were closely followed in South Arabia. The unexpected pact between President Nasser and King Hussain was hailed as a victory for Arab unity and both the Federal government and the Aden Trades Union Congress proclaimed their support and called for volunteers to fight by the side of the Arab armies.

As soon as news of the fighting broke out all else was forgotten. The first reports from Cairo claiming the destruction of four hundred Israeli planes were greeted with cheers and crowds formed in the streets to listen to transistors. Slowly other reports filtered through and as the days passed the overwhelming extent of Arab disaster became known. The early jubilation was replaced by a fierce anger. Much of the bitterness was directed against the Egyptians. For years the Arabs had been deluged with propaganda proclaiming Egyptian military invincibility. The reputation of the Egyptian army had been more than a little tarnished by its performance in the Yemen, but the innumerable photographs of tanks, aircraft and rockets had convinced many people that only a small portion of their forces could be involved there.

The undeniable fact that this magnificent army had been wiped out in three days was unbelievable. Stories that the rockets were made of cardboard and the Egyptian officers had deserted their men abounded. Reports, never confirmed, said two battalions of the FLOSY Liberation

Army, some three hundred Yafais under training in Egypt, had been sent to the front and annihilated south of the Mitla Pass when they refused to retreat having been deserted by the Egyptians on either side of them, were widely believed and increased the conviction that the Egyptians had not fought as well as they might have. Scapegoats had to be found. President Nasser's assertion that British and American planes had aided the Arab defeat received a mixed reception. Some believed it because they wanted to. Others wanted to but were unable to reconcile the truth of the claim with the evidence of their own eyes. The British were not slow in giving maximum publicity to the presence in Aden Harbour of the aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes* which the Egyptians alleged had supplied many of the aircraft which had helped the Israelis. The people's anger turned on the local Jews.

In 1948 Aden had a colony of over ten thousand Jews. The founding of Israel, riots and the ever-present threat of violence at the hands of their Arab neighbours had steadily reduced the Jewish community. In June 1967 only around six hundred remained. Shortly after the crisis broke two elderly Jews were attacked and beaten to death by a mob in Crater. The remainder rushed to sell their shops and businesses and the High Commission, realising that they could no longer guarantee their safety, made arrangements for them all to leave. Charter aircraft, some laid on by the British Zionist Association, ferried the Jews of Aden to new lands and a new life. There were harrowing scenes at the airport where families refused to part with great bundles of household goods, not believing they would be forwarded on. By the middle of June only one Jew remained—an old man who steadfastly refused to leave the land of his birth.

The Adenis did not seem to be aware of the Jewish exodus and the destruction of Jewish property continued. In desperation Arab merchants who had bought Jewish businesses hung large notices outside such as 'This property is owned by Muhammad Ahmad Bazara, an Arab and a patriot', often to no avail. One of the first targets was the Marina Hotel in the Crescent area of Steamer Point. It was soon reduced to a smoking ruin by incendiaries. Looting was prevalent. British troops, later replaced by Aden Armed Police, stood guard over the property concerned. In the latter instance this only tended to regulate the looting as the policemen were not unknown to pocket a fee to allow a looter a 'lucky dip' amongst the debris. In Crater the Armed Police themselves looted a Jew's house in Section A and openly auctioned the contents in the street.

In the Protectorates there were anti-Israeli demonstrations, and from the hills of Haushabi came a macabre story of a tribesman who burnt his wife alive because her grandfather had been a Jew.

The Federal ministers, who could barely conceal their satisfaction at the reversal to Egyptian arms, were deeply shocked by President Nasser's subsequent resignation. They had little reason to love the man whose actions were largely responsible for bringing their country to the edge of ruin. He had caused each of them to be 'sentenced to death' and day by day

Cairo Radio had heaped insults upon them. But such is the charismatic appeal of Nasser that, like many other Arabs, the Federal ministers had difficulty in reconciling a great Arab leader with the deeds of the Egyptian government.

News of President Nasser's return was received with a mixture of relief and jubilation amongst the ordinary people. Curiously, although the Egyptians began to be despised and hated by those who had lived under their rule in the Yemen, the reputation of the President was not seriously affected until the affair of Hakim Amer's 'suicide' two months later.*

A lasting effect of the June War on South Arabia was the closing of the Suez Canal. Aden had founded her prosperity on bunkering ships passing up and down the Red Sea. With the Canal closed there were no ships, the great harbour was empty except for a few dhows and trade brought to a standstill. Even before the war terrorism had seriously affected the economy. In 1962 over 203,000 tourists had stepped ashore to purchase tax free bargains, in 1966 this had dropped to 120,000, the first five months of 1967 brought 6,000. June brought 2.

The Arab-Israeli War also had a profound effect on the Yemen. The Yemen civil war had been in one of its periodic stages of stalemate, the Royalists controlling most of the north and east. The Republicans had forty thousand Egyptian troops holding the coastal plain and the main cities of the south and west. Shortly after hostilities commenced Egyptian Air Force units in the Yemen left for Sinai. Numbers of troops were also withdrawn. Some of these Egyptian soldiers were captured by the Israelis. They complained they had no knowledge of where they were, no maps and no idea of whom they were fighting.

Despite the warnings of their leaders the Royalist tribesmen thought the Egyptians had gone for good. Breaking out of their mountain strongholds they swarmed down the coastal plain, over-running the town of Haradh and nearby port of Maidi. Whilst laying siege to the fishing port of Lialiya some five thousand were caught in the open by remnants of the returning Egyptian Air Force and an armoured column operating out of the Egyptian base at Abs. The tribesmen were decimated and driven back to their hills with great slaughter. Egyptian bombing of the tribes recommenced with redoubled ferocity. There were reports of gas attacks from all parts of Royalist Yemen. One report spoke of three hundred and seventy five casualties in the village of Maibar near Hajja, which had been occupied following the Egyptian withdrawal. None the less, the majority of the Egyptian Army units to survive the Israeli holocaust were in the Yemen and their return home became a matter of necessity. Continued Egyptian

* Field Marshall Hakim Amer, Deputy President of the United Arab Republic and life-long friend of Nasser, was dismissed following the June War. He was later arrested on 2 September charged with negligence leading to the Egyptians' defeat and being involved in a plot to overthrow the President. On 15 September it was announced that he had committed suicide rather than face trial. A story widely believed was that he had been poisoned with or without the President's knowledge.

presence in the Yemen was impossible. They were soon making plans for a final withdrawal.

The British forces in South Arabia were also beginning their phased withdrawal. The first combat troops to leave were the South Wales Borderers and at the end of April the evacuation of service families, 'Operation Relative', began with the departure of a VC10 from Khormaksar carrying eighty-eight wives and children. Eight thousand were to be flown out within the next three months.

For ten years the serviceman's wife and children had been an integral part of the Aden scene, contributing much of its economy and adding to its gaiety.

Soon the girls sunning themselves on the beaches of the Tarshyne Club and the Lido were gone for ever. Gone too were the tedious guards kept day and night on the service blocks in the Maalla Straight and the four white buses, heavily protected with mesh wire and armed escorts, which drove in tight convoy twice daily from Maalla to Steamer carrying the children to school.

An official estimate put the direct contribution of service families to Aden's economy at fifteen million pounds per annum. The total contribution of the services was around nineteen and a half million pounds. Their departure considerably increased Aden's economic woes. The base employed around sixteen thousand workers and several thousand others depended indirectly upon it for their monthly wage. Too late union leaders such as Ali Abdul Rahman Aswadi, FLOSY leader of the Forces' Union, realised that by demanding the removal of the base they had talked themselves out of a job. By the end of July the unofficial total of unemployed had risen to about thirty thousand. For the moment the effect was cushioned by the granting of generous redundancy benefits and the departure of many of the workers to their homes in the Yemen, the Protectorates and Somalia. It would be some months before the full impact of what was happening struck home.

After the end of the Israeli War the dockers, in obedience to Cairo, boycotted British and American ships. For a short while this seriously impeded the steady transfer of the British base to Bahrain. A large generator in particular was a problem because it was far too heavy to airfreight. The difficulty was solved by a Russian cargo ship unable to get home because of the blocked Suez Canal. Business being business, the world over, the captain readily agreed to make two trips to Bahrain carrying the generator as well as other equipment.

Egyptian action in closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and the question of freedom of the seas which it raised highlighted the position of Perim Island at the southern end of the Red Sea, strategically placed in the Bab al Mandeb, the 'Gate of Tears'.* Whoever occupies the island can

*According to tradition the Straits gained their name because it was at this point that early Arab slavers carried their human cargoes across from Africa to the markets of Arabia.

theoretically control shipping passing through the Straits. George Brown offered the island to the United Nations, envisaging some form of international control. On 31 August the thirteen Arab nations wrote to U Thant vigorously opposing the offer and the matter was then dropped.

This was no surprise. Ever since the British first arrived in Perim in 1799 everything that they touched had been doomed to spectacular failure.

The island is two miles from the Yemeni mainland. It is flat and strewn with black boulders, the desolation relieved only by a solitary tree. It is one of the most forlorn places on earth. In 1857 the British formally took possession of the island and it became part of the Settlement of Aden. For some time Aden sent a Commissioner to administrate the small fishing village and the embryo coaling station which was growing up there. This was not a popular posting. Legend has it that one incumbent was met by a senior official of the Colonial Office walking down the Strand. It subsequently transpired that for a number of years he had been administering Perim through the agency of his Indian clerk from the comfort of a London flat.

For a time the coaling station prospered and the island boasted an hotel amongst its facilities. In the late twenties the manager of the coaling station realised that greater profit could be gained if one bag in three humped aboard ships by the coolies was dropped over the far side into the sea. A dredger prudently parked around the corner would emerge after the ship had departed to recover the coal which would then be resold to the next caller. Gradually the word got around and the company went bankrupt. The manager went insane, burning all records including those of the government and departed together with what was left of the cash. The hotel was abandoned and the houses of the workers fell into disrepair, giving the island an added touch of eerie dilapidation.

In 1963 following the British withdrawal from Somaliland it was decided to set up a relay station for the BBC Overseas Service which had formerly been sited in Hargaisha. On 31 March 1963, shortly after the station came into operation, it was burnt down in a mysterious fire. This project was then abandoned.

Britain's plans to internationalise the island once more put Perim in the news and a party of journalists accompanied Leslie Wink 'The Commissioner for Perim' on one of his last visits of inspection. The plane touched down on the rough landing strip and was greeted by the chief electrician and the lighthouse keeper, who stood stiffly to attention, saluting with opposite hands. The Commissioner gravely returned their greeting. A few moments later a Landrover, one of the island's two vehicles, appeared bumping over the boulders flying the Union Jack upside down. It carried Muhammad Shabir, a little round Adeni of uncertain age who was 'our man in Perim' and had been on the island as long as anybody could remember.

Muhammad was delighted with the unexpected guests. A tour of inspection began with a visit to the immaculately kept lighthouse and

the Commissioner dutifully signed an exercise book which had been in service ever since the lighthouse had begun its operations in 1924. Later the Commissioner inspected a guard provided by the island's Armed Police garrison whilst Muhammad cheerfully indicated the spot where a Lieutenant Lawrence, the last Englishman to command it, had been bayonetted to death by his troops. 'Then as now,' Muhammad beamed in answer to a question, 'the money was used to pay spies in the Yemen.' Muhammad also told the tale of the coaling company and confided that in his position of manager's clerk he had thought up the scheme. 'Since then,' he explained disarmingly, 'I've had promotion.'

Much impressed the party moved on to the ramshackle village. Here the oldest inhabitant, a reputed one hundred and four years old who had retired as a judge in 1918, was wheeled out for inspection. This ancient gave vent to the occasional 'praise be to God' and dribbled fitfully into his beard whilst the press stood around drinking lukewarm pepsi cola and swotting at the flies.

No trip to Perim is complete without a study of the graveyard and the visit was rounded off with a look at a £30,000 recreation centre. It was completed three months or so after the station was burnt down and had been intended for the staff of the relay station. It stands today as a monument to the British taxpayer.

Lord Shackleton returned to London from Aden on the 30 May, his mission completed. George Brown then studied his report and the recommendations of the new High Commissioner. On 19 June the Foreign Secretary announced to the House of Commons that the British government could supply £10 millions' more aid in the form of money, armoured cars and field artillery for the South Arabian Army and a military mission after independence to help with advice.

The announcement was a supreme example of a decision taken too late. Years of vacillation and indecision had taken their toll. Even as the Foreign Secretary was speaking events were in train that would make his efforts a useless exercise. On the following day, 20 June, the South Arabian Army mutinied. The Federal government were doomed and British influence in South Arabia with them. Empires are not lost or made by momentous decision but by the smallest changes in policy. The margin of error is often no wider than a minister's pending tray.

Chapter VIII
The Mutiny
19 June-2 July

I am sorry but something appears to have gone wrong.
Colonel Sharif Haidar apologising to the Federal Supreme Council on 4 July 1967.

Mr Fuad Mahfudh Khalifa (who) is a progressive intelligent young man . . .
Dr Rastgeldi in his report, December 1966.

'Power', mused the Sharif of Baihan, 'grows from the edge of a sword' and with that succinctly summed up his fellow countryman's attitude to politics. South Arabia is basically a tribal society which has been at war with itself for centuries. The people have learnt to be canny and cautious. In the event of any struggle they hold back until they see which side has the most strength and the most guns before joining it. Once the British left South Arabia they assumed that the strongest force in the area would be the South Arabian Army. These soldiers were the real kingmakers. The party which gained their allegiance would have the strength to crush their opponents, that which lost it was doomed.

Like the rest of South Arabia the armed forces were riddled with factions and rivalries and although it kept itself in the background during British residency the dominating influence remained tribalism.

To understand the history of the force one must go back to 1921 when Colonel Lake raised a local Aden militia and with a superb disregard for future political implications named his force the First Yemeni Infantry. The Colonel had a strong Indian Army background and throughout its history the force which he raised has been endowed with Indian Army traditions. Even in 1967 the headquarters were known as 'Seedaseer Lines' after an obscure battle fought by the Maharatta Regiment, who built them. The turbans of the immaculate camel troop seemed to come straight out of Hyderabad, and polo playing enthusiasts were never lacking amongst the seconded British Officers. Initially the force had been designed to escort the Governor and political officers on their visits into the hinterland and give support to British and Indian regiments in the event of invasion from the Yemen. In those days Aden and the Protectorates were the preserve of the Royal Air Force and the deterrent threat of their bombing power kept a rough and ready peace. At the same time British policy was one of



29 Men of the Federal forces, mercenary, impulsive and unreliable.

minimum intervention in Protectorate affairs and the number of occasions that the Governor left Aden to visit his charges upcountry were rare indeed. So Colonel Lake's force had very little to do and was eventually disbanded in 1925, only to be reformed in 1928 as the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL). For the next twenty years most of the officers were provided by the Royal Air Force and other than exchanging long range fire with tribal dissidents the force saw little active service. During the Second World War, some elements were sent to help the British in their Somaliland campaign against the Italians but they arrived too late for the fighting. Around the same time an anti-aircraft battery shot down an Italian bomber during a raid over Aden. Called into Aden for the first time by Sir Reginald Champion during the 1948 Jewish riots the new force behaved so badly that the Governor then requested a British battalion be sent to the Colony to control any further disturbances.

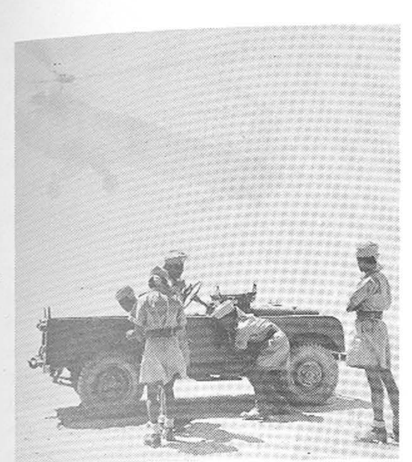
In early 1955 an APL convoy was ambushed by the Ahl Shams Rabiz, a dissident tribe in Yemeni pay in the Wadi Hatib. Two British officers, an Arab officer and five Arab soldiers lost their lives. A year later a battalion was sent to help the Trucial Oman Scouts eject the Saudis from the Burami Oasis. They succeeded in their task only to later mutiny, murder two of their British officers and be sent home in disgrace. Shortly after this the administration and training of the force was taken over by the British Army

although RAF officers continued to be attached. They showed improved form in 1958 when after two attempts supported by the Shropshire Light Infantry and British airpower, a battalion stormed the precipitous Jebel Jihaf and drove a strong force of Yemeni troops and rebel tribesmen back over the Yemen Dhala border.

The formation of the Federation, Egyptian presence in the Yemen and the subsequent troubles in Aden and the Protectorates gave added importance to the force. It already had good supporting and ancillary units, including a first class signals regiment, RAF-run hospital and a squadron of Ferret armoured cars. The force changed its name in 1961 and became the Federal Regular Army and in 1964 a fifth battalion was raised.

Parallel to the evolution of the Federal Army was that of the Federal Guard. In the late 1930s, when political officers were concentrating their efforts on bringing peace to the tribes and opening up the roads, the choleric but occasionally brilliant Lord Belhaven realised the need for a local force to help maintain internal security. As a result the government and tribal guards were formed. At the birth of the Federation these two forces were handed over to the control of the Federal Ministry of Internal Security and renamed Federal Guard I and Federal Guard II. Federal Guard I was based on Champion lines and operated throughout the Federation except, of course, Aden Colony. The Federal Guard II operated only within their own state borders. Aden Colony had an unarmed Civil Police which were supported by the two hundred and fifty strong Aden Armed Police who acted as a riot squad and guarded banks and government buildings. The chief difference in training between the Federal Guard and Federal Regular Army was that the former were an armed police force while officers and men of the latter received a more sophisticated training. Another important difference was the system of promotion. Officers of the Federal Guard were nearly all commissioned after training and drawn from the tribal aristocracy. All Federal Regular Army officers worked their way up through the ranks. Promotion was by merit only and reduced nepotism to a minimum. Consequently a middle class of men who had reached their positions by their own skill and determination came into being. To a certain extent they became detribalised and their traditional allegiances were worn thin by the passing of time. The social differences between the Federal Army officer and his Federal Guard colleague was often demonstrated when he went back home on leave. It was not unusual to find a Federal Army Major sitting below the salt whilst a Federal Guard Lieutenant enjoyed the conversation of his tribal elder of Shaikh. The thought that the Federal Army might one day assert itself never seemed to occur to their aristocratic brethren.

In the beginning of the Emergency, Federal Army and Federal Guard units took part in several savagely fought skirmishes with rebel bands, particularly in the Radfan and Dathina. After Lord Beswick's announcement of withdrawal in February 1966 their enthusiasm for the Federal cause began to wane. Nevertheless despite the constant urging by



30 The Federal forces relied on British air support

Cairo Radio to revolt there were no signs of trouble and the number of desertions remained insignificant. Whilst they continued to draw their pay Federal soldiers were content to give lip service to the Federal government, getting in touch at the same time with NLF and FLOSY elements. The Federal Guard in particular were not slow to profit fron the situation. Manning lonely and remote forts they were difficult to supervise. 'The fort of Waalan was attacked by the corrupted ones from the north and east and firing continued fiercely for four hours. There were no casualties. Please send forty thousand rounds to replace our ammunition'* was typical of many telegrams received from Federal posts from the Ministry of Internal Security at al Ittihad. The ammunition was usually sold and Federal Guard were not unknown to arrange the 'attacks' or fire on their own fort to get it. Undoubtedly from the middle of 1966 Federal Army and Federal Guard officers, whose vehicles were absolved from search, were engaged in smuggling arms into Aden.

In their search for greater security the Federal government had asked for British help in increasing the strength of the armed forces. The role of the Federal Army was extended to include a battery or artillery previously supplied by British troops. A South Arabian Air Force with Jet Provosts, Dakotas and helicopters was formed with Barry Atkinson, a Royal Air Force Wing Commander who had previously seen service with the Sultan of Muscat's Armed Forces, at its head with maintenance provided by Airwork and pilots on special contracts. Similarly a South Arabian Navy with British inshore minesweepers began to make its appearance in Aden Harbour.

* Apocryphal but typical.

As part of its expansion and co-ordination of the armed forces the Federal government increased the size of its army by merging four battalions of Federal Guard with it. The remainder of the Federal Guard I together with Federal Guard II and later the Aden Civil and Armed Police were to merge into a single police. The amalgamation took place at a ceremony attended by Fadhl bin Ali of Lahej, the Federal Defence Minister, on 1 June 1967, the two forces becoming the South Arabian Army and the South Arabian Police.

The South Arabian Army was commanded by a British officer, Brigadier Jack Dye, and the problem of who was to succeed him had much exercised the minds of the Federal government. When the British first raised the Arab forces they wisely paid strict attention to the tribal balance within them, recruiting was done on a tribal basis and theoretically no tribe was allowed to exceed its quota. Over the years social and political circumstances had gradually brought about a breakdown in the system. In 1948 Haidara the Amir of Dhala, was removed and Dhalais were considered subversive, so no Dhalais were recruited that year, in the 1950s it was the turn of the Yafais and so on. Other tribes such as the Baihanis and Lahejis tended to serve for a short time only and then leave, so reducing their tribes' influence in the force.

The result was that at the time of the amalgamation the South Arabian Army was dominated by the Aulaqis who represented 33% of the officers and 28% of the men.

Under Brigadier Jack Dye, the senior Arab officer was Colonel Nasir Buraiq Aulaqi, a small pug-like figure who presided over the Seedaseer Lines headquarters staff. Nasir Buraiq had never commanded a battalion and rarely moved upcountry. He was a born intriguer and kept a firm hold over army administration. There was little which escaped his keen eye and despite the limitations imposed by the British system of army accounting he contrived to make himself a fortune. Rumour had it that every sweeper, every contractor employed by the army and many of its soldiers paid the Colonel his dues. A large block of flats in Shaikh Uthman stood as testimony to his financial acumen. The British had tried to get rid of him for years. Brigadier Dye had even gone to the extent of refusing to take up his appointment until the Colonel resigned. Nasir Buraiq hung on and the Brigadier was forced to give in. The secret of the Colonel's success was two-fold. Firstly as an Aulaqi he automatically had the support of Muhammad Farid, the Aulaqi Foreign Minister, secondly he had won the confidence of Fadhl bin Ali, the Minister of Defence. Fadhl bin Ali was a shy man and his elevated position in South Arabian aristocracy was a further barrier to mixing with the *hoi poloi* of army officers. Nasir Buraiq was not deterred. Although he was a man who had risen to a high position from nothing he made a determined and successful attempt to get on well with the Sultan. Sultan Fadhl was at first flattered and then interested in the Colonel's attentions and the two became firm friends. Scarce a night went by without the Colonel calling upon the Minister in his palace at Dar Saad

for a chat and a bunch of qat. Sultan Fadhl felt he knew and trusted Nasir Buraiq and staunchly refused to countenance his removal.

So Colonel Nasir Buraiq, as a senior Arab officer, automatically became the commander-designate of the South Arabian Army. The choice of second in command was equally difficult. There were two candidates in the field, Lt Colonel Muhammad Ahmad Aulaqi, an able and sophisticated officer who had won the Military Medal in the Wadi Hatib, and Lt Colonel Sharif Haidar, the senior Arab officer of the Federal Guard and nephew of the Sharif of Baihan. Colonel Haidar had long intimated that he would be prepared to serve as second in command but not move down into third place. Colonel Chaplin, the British Military Secretary in the Federal Defence Ministry, who had already had a frustrating time trying to get rid of Nasir Buraiq, threatened to resign unless his recommendation that Muhammad Ahmad Aulaqi get the job was accepted, on the grounds that he was a better qualified soldier. The Federal government reluctantly agreed and an unfortunate compromise was reached. Both men would hold the appointment of second in command, Colonel Haidar in charge of administration, Colonel Muhammad in charge of operations, but in the absence of the commander Colonel Muhammad would take over. In other words both men were equal but the Aulaqi was more equal than the other. In effect not only did the Aulaqis provide the two most senior South Arabian Army officers but the quartermaster and seven out of ten battalion commanders were Aulaqi as well.

Colonel Haidar was not taken in by his high-sounding title and set to work gathering support for a 'redress of grievance' to be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Defence along with a request for a redistribution of senior posts. He had little difficulty in his task. The rest of the army was alarmed and jealous of the Aulaqi predominance and the three most senior non-Aulaqi colonels agreed to add their names jointly with Haidar on the petition.*

As was Arab custom the petition went the rounds of the battalions and others less prominent also appended their names. Behind the scenes support for Haidar was forthcoming from Colonel Ali bin Ahmad, nephew of the Minister of Defence and commander-designate of the South Arabian Police, who did not wish to annoy his uncle by coming into the open.

Armed with their petition and convinced of the justice of their case the four colonels presented their demands to the Federal government. Brigadier Dye had just returned from Malta and on the advice of his staff took firm action and persuaded the Federal government to suspend the colonels from duty pending investigation. Rumours went through the

* They were Lt Colonel Ahmad Muhammad Hassaini of Dathina; Lt Colonel Hussain Uthman Ashal, also of Dathina, and Lt Colonel Muhammad Said of Yafa'. The last named left the army a few weeks later to return home and look after his brother Haidar released from Broadmoor following a tribal murder in a Sheffield factory in 1954.



31 The Minister of Defence with his loyal officers, 2 February 1967.
Back row left to right: Col. J.B. Chaplin DSO, OBE (retd), PS to Min of Defence, now bursar of a girls' school in Kent; Qaid Salem Abdullah Abdalli, CO 4 FRA, supporter of the NLF, murdered shortly after independence; Qaid Abdullah Ahmed Aulaqi MC, CO 2 FRA, supporter of FLOSY, now in exile; Qaid Abdul Qawi Muhammad Maflahi, CO 1 FRA, supporter of the NLF, killed by landmine in Dhala; Qaid Muhammad Said Yafai MBE, CO Trg Bn FRA, retired from the army before independence to look after his brother released from Broadmoor, active supporter of the NLF and now coordinator of transport in the Third Governate; Qaid Ali Abdullah Maisari, CO 5 FRA, the NLF's chief organiser in the Federal Armed Forces, prime instigator of the mutiny, made commander in 1968 but murdered on the orders of the NLF High Command.
Front row left to right: Aqeed Ahmed Muhammad Hassani, Comd Area East, active member of the NLF who became close supporter of Qahtan al Shaabi, fled abroad on his overthrow and died in mysterious circumstances in 1974; Aqeed Muhammad Ahmed Aulaqi MC, Deputy Comd (Designate), late convert to the NLF, rode in the independence cavalcade with the President, but dismissed shortly afterwards and is now confined to a smallholding in his tribal area; His Highness Sultan Fadhl Bin Ali al Abdali, Minister of Defence, now in exile in Jeddah; Zaim J.B. Dye OBE, MC, Comd FRA, became a general and now retired; Aqeed Nasser Buraik Aulaqi MBE, Deputy Comd FRA, now in exile in Jeddah, the occasional Generalissimo of armed resistance to the present regime.

army like wildfire. The colonels had been dismissed, the colonels had been imprisoned: their supporters planned demonstrations with the object of getting their leaders reinstated. How deeply the colonels themselves were involved in the events which followed is obscure. Certainly they knew that something was being planned on their behalf and on Monday the 19 June, the night before the demonstrations were due to take place, they visited Fadhl bin Ali in his Daar Saad palace and warned him that the only way to avoid trouble was to have them reinstated immediately. The Sultan refused and in any case it was too late, men with motives more sinister than mere tribalism had taken a hand.

Lt Colonel Hussain Uthman Ashal, of the Federal Guard, was deeply involved with the NLF as was his friend and opposite number in the Federal Army, Lt Colonel Ali Abdullah Maisiri. It was this man who set about organising and co-ordinating the demonstrations which were envisaged to be of a peaceful nature. During a final meeting of fellow plotters at the Lake Lines Training he was interrupted by a telephone call from Lt Colonel Coles, a British officer with the Middle East Command under whom he had previously served. Coles asked him if anything was wrong and if he could visit Lake Lines. Colonel Maisiri answered shortly that a visit was out of the question and 'it was too late to stop anything.' Forty-eight hours later when everything was over Colonel Coles was sitting in his office. The telephone rang, it was Colonel Maisiri. 'I am sorry,' that was all he said.

The British had already had indications of the impending trouble. That night the Aulaqi orderly officer at the Bir Fuqum training camp had learnt of a plot to seize the armoury. Locking the store he sent his orderly running with the keys across the volcanic hills to 24 Brigade headquarters in Little Aden from where they were eventually delivered to Brigadier Dye. This was the first splutter of the mutiny which on the morrow was to spark like a jumping jack to and fro across Aden and destroy forever the unity of what on paper was one of the finest Arab forces in the Arabian Peninsula and at that time, apart from the Kuwait Army, the best paid in the Middle East.

Like every other morning in South Arabia, 20 June dawned bright and clear. Firm action had been taken by the Arab officers in Bir Fuqum, felt to be the main centre of possible trouble, and all was quiet.

At 7 am troops on muster parade at Lake Lines suddenly broke rank and surged through the camp shouting slogans in favour of the suspended colonels, breaking windows and setting fire to two of the office blocks. Thoroughly alarmed, South Arabian Army headquarters in Seedaseer Lines which was quiet under the tight control of Colonel Nasir Buraiq, sent a request to the South Arabian Police in Champion Lines to stand by to restore order. This was a fatal mistake.

Champion Lines lies about a mile to the south of Lake Lines across the salt flats and occupied land between the Khormaksar-Shaikh Uthman road and the airport. On the opposite side of the road was the tented Radfan Camp, then garrisoned by the Lancashire Fusiliers, and looking towards

the sea stretched a vast expanse of marshy brown sand where the rifle and, farther to the north, bombing ranges were situated. The South Arabian Police were in the middle of their own protest when the order came for them to stand to. They could hear the noise of the Lake Lines riot and were in no mood to stop it. Rumours that British troops would be used to restore order abounded. The policemen became very excited and milling about began to fire shots in the air. A bren-gunner was despatched to the mosque tower which, although only thirty feet high, dominated the area. By this time Arab officers in Lake Lines had themselves restored order. The disturbances in the South Arabian Army were over, they had been enough.

Random shots from Champion Lines began to fall in the civil airport area behind the camp, bringing all traffic to a halt, and across the road into Radfan Camp. The first casualties occurred at about 10 am when an Aden Police officer apparently wondering what the noise was all about, stopped his car at the camp gate. He was promptly shot dead along with his driver. A few minutes later a Briton working for the Federal Public Works Department was killed passing the barracks in his car. British army trucks could be seen driving towards the camps from the rifle range opposite. Whether the bren-gunner on the mosque thought they were coming to attack will never be known but he took no chances and opened up. Caught in the open at a range of four hundred yards without a vestige of cover the British soldiers, men of the Royal Corps of Transport returning from their annual range classification, stood no chance. Eight were killed and for the next three-quarters of an hour the machine gunner kept himself amused by firing bursts at the survivors hugging the ground for cover whenever he felt he saw them move. The youngest subaltern of the Lancashire Fusiliers in Radfan Camp was also mortally wounded by a stray shot.

Nobody knew what was happening, least of all the Federal government who hurriedly reinstated the colonels, who in turn immediately withdrew their petition and despatched Colonels Ali bin Ahmad and Sharif Haidar to Champion Lines to see what they could do. At the same time, fearing for the safety of British officers attached to the South Arabian Police, they asked British troops to help restore order. The King's Own Borderers moved into Champion Lines and with the help of loyal Arab officers quickly brought things under control with the loss of only one soldier and killing four policemen including the machine gunner on the mosque. The focus of the mutiny now transferred to al Ittihad.

The Federal capital had a small garrison of South Arabian Police for guard duties and until 11.30 am all was quiet. The Federal ministers and their senior military and civil advisors had met for their normal weekly meeting in the map-line operations room, concluded the trouble was over and returned to their offices. Shaikh Muhammad Farid was the first to hear of further trouble. While giving the BBC 'Panorama' television team the Federal views on George Brown's speech the previous day he heard of developments in Champion Lines. He quickly finished the interview and.

forgetting that he had another with the South Arabian Broadcasting Service, left.

Around this time the South Arabian Police heard their colleagues were being attacked by British troops. Panic fed on rumour and was reinforced by the sound of gun fire which could just be heard over the roof of the Secretariat. The officers promptly bolted and the troops began to run wild. They had no motive other than fear; no direction and their uncertainty of what to do was quickly illustrated. Major Peter Bartlett a British officer with the South Arabian Army was driving his blue Renault down the dual carriageway to the main road where he was approached by three of the policemen. The first pointed his rifle, the second waved his arms and the third presented arms. Bartlett drove on.

Meanwhile the troops poured into the Secretariat. Some pushed up and down the corridors shouting and smashing everything breakable; others lined the roof and, pulling down the Federal flag, prepared for the arrival of the British troops. Not all the ministers had fled. Fadhl bin Ali together with Colonel Chaplin locked themselves in their office and oblivious of the sound of breaking glass telephoned round in an effort to restore order. Sultan Salih, who as Minister of Internal Security, was responsible for the South Arabian Police, remained calm and tried to contact the officers. He gathered two English secretaries and some English officials into his office where they were later joined by the Minister of Defence. Obali, Minister of Education, also distinguished himself. While working in his office he heard a rifle butt go through the outer windows. Peering round the door he saw his staff had left and, wisely concluding that this was no time to be walking abroad, he returned to his files.

The atmosphere was explosive. For a space it seemed as if the scene was set for a general massacre but the disturbances fizzled out as quickly as they had begun and nobody was hurt.

When at last the officers were found they returned and persuaded their men to go back to barracks. When those on the roof saw the British had not put in the expected attack they wandered off to lunch and that was that. Sultan Salih described the events as 'the blackest day in the history of the Federation'. He was right, but the most tragic and far-reaching incident was still to come.

The Crater Pass is one of the highest points around Aden. The view from the wide car park, once famous as the most romantic spot in the Colony, encompasses the towns of Maala and Khormaksar and stretches away over the dhow harbour to al Ittihad on the other side of the bay to the mountains of the Radfan in the distance. It is a focal point of the old fortifications and an enormous multi-coloured plaque pays tribute to the South Wales Borderers who helped to build them. A solid roundhouse of the Martello tower-type perched high on the side of the crater guards the pass which, until it was widened by a dual carriageway, could have been held by a handful against an army. From the pass the road drops steeply into the

town of Crater. To the left blocks of flats back onto the mountainside and on the right houses sink below the level of the road and give way to the Armed Police barracks and civil prison at the bottom of the hill.

In times of trouble it was British army practice to use the police barracks as their headquarters. Throughout the morning of the twentieth no disturbances were reported from Crater, but because of the general uncertainty it was decided to man the operations room in the barracks just in case. A mixed patrol of Northumberland Fusiliers and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in two Landrovers moved down from the pass. What they did not know was that the Armed Police had received a mysterious telephone call to the effect that British troops were attacking the South Arabian forces, which in the case of Champion Lines was partially true. As usual, rumour bred rumour and the police had quickly convinced themselves that the whole of the South Arabian forces were locked in a death struggle with the British. They also decided that an attempt would be made to disarm them. From the very start of the Emergency the Armed Police had been a centre of terrorist activities, so FLOSY and NLF elements were soon and easily contacted. About fifteen 'commandos' together with some thirty policemen, took up positions in the flats and behind walls facing the junction where a patrol would have to turn to enter the barracks.

Unaware of the danger the patrol drove on. It was not until a burst of gun fire hit the lead Landrover, instantly killing its driver and front seat passenger, that they realised they had been ambushed. In a few minutes it was all over. Caught in their vehicles at point-blank range the soldiers in the Landrovers were quickly killed. Only one escaped.

Fusilier John Storey was travelling in the rear of the second Landrover when the vehicles were hit by a hail of fire from the Armed Police supported by insurgents. The lead vehicle swung out of control and exploded against the wall of the police barracks. A bullet struck Storey across the ribs and he was shot in the arm as he ran across the dual carriageway and took shelter in the doorway of a block of flats.

Looking back, he saw that none of his companions had survived and made his way up the stairs to the roof. There was silence in the street below, the whole action had taken about three minutes. The time was 12 noon. Retracing his way down the stairs, he tried each of the flats in turn, they were locked. A new burst of firing brought him back to the roof ten minutes later. There, overhead, a solitary helicopter hovered, a silver speck against a cloudless blue sky. On the other side of the road, two Arabs were firing hopefully into the air. Placing the catch of his Sterling sub-machine gun on automatic, the soldier took careful aim and emptied his magazine. Both Arabs were hit and fell, and then like lightning, he raced back into the shelter of the building. As the insurgents began to surround the building, Storey waited on a landing. An Arab carrying a child came up the stairs. Storey forced him to open his flat where the family of women and old men were huddled. Storey divided the family and sat with the

men and waited. Outside, the insurgents were searching the flats, following the trails of blood up and down the stairs but were unable to discover their quarry. Then came the unmistakable sound of flats being searched one by one.

The men pleaded with him to leave. If he was found in their flat, they all expected to be killed. The building was built against the side of the crater and although Storey was on the fourth floor, the rock wall stood eight feet or so from the rear balcony. He leapt out and slithered to the foot of the slope below, lacerating his right leg. His flight was spotted and, in no time, he was trapped in a narrow alley way between two buildings which had been stocked up by breeze blocks as a security measure. Families in the flats above leant over their balconies and directed the hunt. Darkness was falling and, in the gloom, the police approached with great caution not realising his ammunition was exhausted. Storey shouted for an officer and offered to be arrested. This was accepted so he flung his weapon over the wall and was taken by a sergeant to the police Landrover. Bodies from the road were being placed in the back, Storey sat in the front. The vehicle was soon surrounded by an angry mob, screaming for blood. On the right of the crater far above the scene, British troops suddenly opened fire. The crowd dispersed, the driver of the Landrover leapt from his cab and Storey was alone, but by this time faint from his injuries. He remembers being taken into the barracks, his wounds tended and a little while later, an ambulance took him to the safety of Khormaksar Hospital. This was shortly after 6.00 pm, the longest six hours in John Storey's life.

Ominous radio silence and the sound of firing led to a second patrol in two armoured vehicles of the Queen's Dragoon Guards led by 2nd Lt Davis, being sent to investigate. On reaching the bottom of the hill they were met with heavy fire. The observers could see army Landrovers and bodies lying in the road. They decided to return and left four men behind to investigate further. Nobody knows for sure how these soldiers died. Five minutes after their patrol returned for reinforcements a heavy burst of firing was heard and then silence. A third patrol again in two armoured vehicles returned and engaged the mutineers in a short fierce gun battle. The armoured cars, their tyres shot away and machine guns bent by the bullets of their assailants, were forced to retire but not before they had claimed the lives of four policemen and five 'commandos'.

The British troops were now faced with a crucial choice. They could either go and put down the mutiny by force, or wait upon events. The service chiefs and the High Commissioner, believing that precipitate action could spark off wholesale mutiny amongst the South Arabian armed forces and uncertain of the extent to which the Armed Police had been involved, chose the latter course. Although the decision was much criticised at the time, events were to prove them right. The twelve soldiers were dead. Many more would have been killed trying to recover the bodies; the whole of the Armed Police would have been forced to side with the mutineers if the British, intent upon revenge, had descended into Crater in

strength.

For the moment all was panic in the Armed Police barracks. Retribution was expected any moment and the mutineers abandoned their positions and rushed to urge their stunned colleagues to join them. They pointed out that when the British returned their fury would not distinguish between the minority of mutineers and the majority of onlookers. They won their point and the others reluctantly agreed to take up defensive positions. Fortunately the matter was never put to the test. The apparent schizophrenic behaviour of the Armed Police who on one hand continued to carry out their duties guarding banks, government buildings and looking after a wounded British soldier and were on the other clearly shooting at his fellows—this puzzled the British for days.

At about 1 pm a further incident occurred when a Sioux helicopter lifting off a picket of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers from the ruin of the crater was hit by rifle fire. The pilot, Sergeant Forde of the QDG's, was wounded in the knee but nevertheless was able to set his already blazing aircraft back on the ground. The two Fusilier passengers were thrown clear. One suffering a broken leg, the other Fusilier Duffy returned into the flames to drag the injured pilot clear. He then went back again to rescue his wireless with which he radioed for help. For this exploit Fusilier Duffy was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

When the British did not put in their expected appearance the mutineers took heart and began to snipe at the troops on the pass. Most of Crater, however, retired to their houses bolting and barring their doors fearfully awaiting the bloodbath that never came.

By nightfall law and order in the town broke down completely. Looting was prevalent and some one hundred and thirty convicts held in the civil prison broke out and made good their escape. In the evening an army helicopter hovering above the town in the hope of spotting some clue as to what was happening was hit by sniper fire and crashed into the side of the mountains. Miraculously the crew of three escaped with injuries.

Thereafter Crater was given over to the mob and the night brought firebugs to the streets who set aflame cars and stalls and shops in an orgy of destruction. The first target was the Aden Legislative Assembly which stood aloof on its rock, unused since the days of Mackawee. A former church and a permanent reminder of British efforts to inflict their form of democracy on an alien race. It was an irresistible temptation to hooligans and revolutionaries alike. By 8 pm troops manning the road block on the beach road were watching the weird shadows playing on the mountains illuminated by the blaze. Some hours later the roof fell in in a shower of sparks and by morning all that was left was a pair of blackened gables—a grim signpost of things to come.

That night, in the comparatively peaceful surroundings of the conference room at Government House, the British administration met to face the unpalatable fact that Crater, the heart of the commercial life of

Aden Colony, was in the hands of insurgents. They were hamstrung through lack of intelligence. Without it they were unable to follow the course of events and distinguish between friend and foe. The attitude of the South Arabian forces was of particular concern both in Aden and upcountry in the Federation.

Nowhere was the unpredictability of the South Arabian Army better illustrated than at al Anad, a tented camp between Lahej and Radfan at the junction of the main Yemen and Dhala roads. In the morning a company had been detailed to move down into Aden in case it was required to restore order in Lake Lines. It left without a murmur or any sign of trouble. Later in the day after odd pieces of news had filtered through the company that had been left behind suddenly took off and headed down the road in their three tonners to join in the fray. Behind raced a Landrover full of officers beseeching them to return. They were met half way by Major Bartlett who was having an exciting day. He told them that all was well and persuaded them to return to camp.

The colonels' petition had been circulated amongst the upcountry garrisons and demonstrations of support had been planned. Slogans were shouted in Dhala and for some time a company was out of control. In Mukairas British and Arab garrisons confronted each other across the air strip but the moment of danger soon passed. While in Baihan the men refused to parade until the Sharif himself came down to the camp and, adjusting his spectacles, quietly informed them that unless they obeyed the order his tribesmen would slaughter the lot. They did as they were told and the Sharif returned to his palace to entertain an English friend up from Aden for the day.

The mutiny was over by four o'clock on the twentieth but the scars never healed. In most Arab eyes, when British troops were called in to restore order in Champion Lines, the Federal government had ranged itself alongside the allies of Israel against their fellow Arabs. For their part the British were deeply disappointed that none of the Federal ministers in al Ittihad had attempted to pacify the troops and their remaining confidence in the Federal government diminished accordingly.

In tribal eyes the British withdrawal from Crater was a humiliating defeat. In the wadis and mountains, by countless camp fires and battlemented houses the talk was the same—the British were finished and their friends were finished with them. The tribes took note and looked to the future. The army and the rest of South Arabia was on the march to anarchy. The deep tribal divisions in the army had broken into the open so that from this day forward it was commanded by a committee unable to take any decisive action for fear of doing itself irreparable harm. As the mutineers went through the mockery of apologising to the Federal Supreme Council for their misdeeds and otherwise went unpunished the younger officers and soldiers realised the extent of their power and refused to carry out orders unless they personally agreed with them. The 'shield of

the Federation', as the army was hopefully called by the Aden Radio, was to stand aside and watch the government which had fathered it crumble and collapse.

The political effects of the mutiny were not immediately apparent in Aden which was undergoing a period of increased terrorist activity given a fillip by the loss of British control in Crater. At dawn on the twenty-first, FLOSY 'commandos' who had occupied the Turkish fort on the heights of the pass during the night, began firing random shots at traffic passing along the Khormaksar-Maalla road below. Royal Marines were called in to winkle them out and found themselves seeking cover beneath the car park wall. Their automatic weapons made little impression on the six foot thick walls which would disappear behind clouds of dust and smoke but when everything had cleared remained to all intents and purposes intact. Eventually the troops obtained permission to use a Saladin armoured car with its powerful 76mm gun. One shot was enough. The 'commandos' tumbled out of the fort like weevils out of cheese and were cut down by the supporting small arms fire. The heights were then occupied by the Marines for the duration of the siege. A Carl Gustav anti-tank gun was used to demolish the nearest house in Crater which was being used by snipers.

In Crater two days later the mob moved on to sack the Supreme Court. At about the same time Government House received an irate telephone call from the Chief Justice, Sir Richard le Gallais. It seems nobody had informed that gentleman of the British withdrawal and he had been intending to attend Thursday Court as usual. Only with difficulty was he persuaded not to journey to complain personally. The private reason given was that Sir Richard's temper would ignite the thousands of gallons of oil flowing across the Tawahi-Maalla road following a bazooka attack on the BP storage tank. In a day eighteen thousand tons of crude oil flowed into Aden Harbour. Large tanks are easy targets and a few days later a similar attack was made on the Caltex tanks across the harbour.

In answer to appeals from Cairo the militants turned their attention to government buildings and foreign business establishments. In the following fortnight Mitchell Cotes, Bata and other foreign companies suffered from their incendiaries. In a fit of revolutionary passion FLOSY burnt down the immigration offices and the Maalla customs house. A current FLOSY pamphlet explained 'after freedom there will be no need for these badges of colonialism.'

On 30 June an Aden Airways Viscount was blown up on the runway. The incident was somewhat surprisingly described by the airport officer as 'a triumph for security'. As the plane was destroyed in a departure area and not actually in flight he may have been right.

The saga of Aden Airways is a book in itself. They served South Arabia well for eighteen years before they were destroyed by their own Arab staff. They had more than their full share of nationalists, including al Asnag, 'Grenadier' Khalifa, Abdul Rahmin Qassim of FLOSY and the NLF terrorists Tawfiq Ubali and Hussain Duqmi. By their unreasonable and

ever-increasing demands over the years these revolutionaries made it impossible for the company to continue. The wrecked Viscount was their last plane.

The revolutionaries who had so quickly and unexpectedly gained control of Aden's main commercial and trading centre soon found themselves divided into hostile camps.

The root of the trouble was the murder of a FLOSY gunman, Haidar Shamshir, by the NLF in the previous April. The dead man's widow had been imploring her family to take revenge and had shamed them by refusing to discard her black dress of mourning until they did so. After the destruction of the British patrol the NLF had taken to walking openly around the streets and this gave FLOSY their chance. Led by al Baihani, a convict who had escaped from jail the previous day, a group marched into the Maidan where they found the NLF leader Abdulla Mudram sitting in a cafe. After a brief exchange Baihani shot Mudram dead and the triumphant party then dragged the body through the streets to where pretty Fawzia Shamshir waited at her window.

With a cry of anguish the girl spat upon the corpse, tearing off her robe. Family honour had been satisfied but the NLF were furious and were soon clamouring for vengeance. The presence of the British soldiers on the hills was temporarily ignored as the revolutionaries set about liquidating each other. At the end of three days of intermittent fighting the ever-present threat of British re-occupation compelled the leaders of both sides to meet under the shadow of the Aidrous Mosque. The NLF delegates were adamant. The fighting would continue unless Baihani was surrendered. FLOSY agreed and the luckless ex-convict was dragged screaming from the slaughterhouse where he had taken refuge.

Having succeeded in this the NLF promptly increased their demands. They pointed out their prisoner was an ex-convict, a person of no consequence, hardly a worthwhile exchange for the dead Mudram. The NLF claimed the way to keep the balance was for the FLOSY leader to surrender himself as a hostage for the future good behaviour of his party. The demand was refused and both sides settled down to an uneasy truce. The silence which hung over Crater was intermittently broken as the revolutionaries amused themselves by sniping at the British soldiers on the pass above.

The FLOSY leader in Crater was none other than the Mayor, Fuad Khalifa. Tall, dark, urbane and speaking impeccable English, he came from the same family as 'Grenadier' Khalifa of the airport bomb fame and like him, was slightly unbalanced.

When it became obvious the British had left Crater and were not immediately returning, Fuad hoisted the red flag above the Municipality and announced the birth of the 'People's Democratic Republic of Crater', appointing himself as its first President.

Accumulation of wealth was the prime motive behind involvement in local politics and Fuad used his position as chairman of the Aden

Municipality to amass as much as possible. Over the years his name had become a byeword for bribery and extortion on the grand scale. Sometime in 1965 Fuad hit on the idea that terrorism could be used as a cover for armed robbery. Employing his family and official position he soon became a senior FLOSY member whose gangs he used to raid banks and merchants. At a conservative estimate they netted over £1 million. Some of the money was used to finance FLOSY, the rest salted away. The NLF were well aware of Fuad's reputation and hatched a plan to kidnap the FLOSY leader and hold him to ransom in exchange for a share of his loot.

Perhaps because Crater was predominantly FLOSY Fuad became careless and over-confident. Every Sunday it was his custom to drink beer and chew qat with cronies in a secluded cafe on Crater's Sira Island. The fact that the town was besieged and in a state of virtual civil war made no difference. The Mayor was a man of habit and liked to keep up appearances.

By five o'clock on 27 June the party was in full swing so that a dozen heavily armed NLF had little difficulty in holding his friends at bay. Fuad, together with his chief lieutenant, was bundled into his own Mercedes and driven away down the short causeway that connects the island to the town.

Fuad Khalifa has not been seen in Aden since. After his kidnapping he was drugged by Ba Faqih, a pro-NLF doctor, and smuggled out of Crater in an ambulance. He was then taken to the NLF stronghold in Wadi Buran near the Yemen border with Dhala. Here he was forced by his captors to run barefoot over sharp rocks and was last heard of working with a road construction gang for the good of the people.

Two days elapsed, then paratroopers on patrol in Shaikh Uthman heard shots coming from the first storey of a terraced house. Bursting in, the soldiers were just in time to glimpse an NLF gunman escaping over the roofs. He had been thwarted in the attempt to murder the prisoners who lay bound and gagged on the floor. One of the men was dead, two others severely wounded; the fourth was unhurt but speechless with terror.

The dead man turned out to be none other than al Baihani last heard of in besieged Crater; sealed off by British troops who gave passage only to police and ambulance vehicles and these received more than a cursory inspection. Not surprisingly the discovery gave the authorities food for thought. Baihani and most NLF prisoners had been taken out of Crater in a fire engine. It clanged its bell imperiously and, preceded by a police car, was always speedily waved through the road blocks and past the queues of civilian cars which sweating soldiers searched fruitlessly to the intense irritation of the occupants.

The paratroopers, at their headquarters at the police station, had been alerted by an anonymous telephone call from a FLOSY supporter. The NLF in turn were tipped off minutes before the raid by a Shaikh Uthman policeman and preferred to kill their captives rather than allow their rescue.

After the High Commissioner it was generally agreed that the most difficult post in Aden was held by the Commissioner of Police. Even before

the State of Emergency the Aden Civil Police has possessed an unhealthy reputation for small time corruption on a wide scale. No sub-inspector was without a large private car and it was common knowledge that the pirate taxis were using the power of the law to sweep competitors off the streets.

As soon as, and probably even before, the police saw the British had no intention of upholding the law they buckled under the threat of terrorism. By 1967 the Aden Police harboured more than its fair share of collaborators, fellow travellers and, most dangerous of all, men who would do anything for a quiet life; a number of active terrorists sheltered in its ranks and the force was split from top to bottom between NLF and FLOSY. For two years policemen had been actively engaged in the smuggling of arms into Aden, the FLOSY cell in Steamer Point, for instance, relied for their supplies on the police launch which ferried their arms across the harbour. Yet at the same time the police still had the appearance of an organised force and its record of apprehending common criminals remained good.

The post of Commissioner was held by Peter Owen, a large genial Englishman who had come to Aden straight from the race riots of Guyana. On arrival he faced a crucial decision, either to clear up the police, which virtually meant disbanding the lot and starting again, or trying to hold the force together so there would be something to hand over to the new government. At the same time, the vast extent of 'revolutionary' penetration was not appreciated and with independence just round the corner, Peter Owen soldiered on.

After the withdrawal of the British from Crater the only means the administration had of keeping in touch with events in the town was through the Civil and Armed Police both of which, in the main, continued to report for duty. Through the police, electricity and water supplies cut during the siege and subsequent riots were restored and arrangements made for ambulances to pass freely in and out of 'besieged' Crater.

A week after the mutiny Owen considered that things had quietened down enough to permit a tentative reconnaissance and, accompanied by an adventurous television team, became the first Englishman back into Crater with a short visit to the Armed Police. On the surface all appeared normal and there was little sign of the ferment underneath. The streets had been cleaned up and barricades set up by enthusiasts to resist the expected British counter attack had been dismantled. Armed Police were going about their duties normally and arrangements made by which a large amount of money to pay the rest of the Colony's salaries was taken out of one of the banks went off smoothly. What Owen did not realise was that the Armed Police were taking time off to snipe at the British road blocks on the Marine Drive, taking part in the interfactional fighting which normally flared up as soon as night fell and during daytime rounding up 'stooges' for the benefit of FLOSY's 'kangaroo courts'. This last practice died out with the kidnapping of Mayor Khalifa.

The presence of an insurgent Crater in the heart of Aden Colony was a

continuing embarrassment and humiliating to the British but the problem remained of how to regain control without precipitating bloodshed or further mutiny amongst the South Arabian forces. At first it was suggested that the South Arabian Army should take on the job themselves but they were in no condition to accept and turned down the offer. The problem was further complicated by the presence of Laheji State Guards in the Sultan's Crater palace, a large brown gothic pile of indescribable ugliness that looked out onto Front Bay. The Sultan's guards had come to an understanding with the militants so that a state of armed truce prevailed between them. The Sultan himself, not unnaturally fearing for his property, sought assurances from the military that they would not attack it. As snipers were clearly firing from cover of the corners of the building the soldiers were not inclined to give the required guarantees and charged that the guards themselves were not above taking the occasional pot shot at the Argylls across the bay. The Sultan reiterated that his guards were likely to defend the palace against all comers, militants and British troops alike. In an attempt to solve the difficulty one staff officer went so far as to suggest that the Laheji should only fire upon the British if the troops entered the confines of the palace. His more down to earth colleagues were not slow to point out that anybody under any circumstances who fired on them was liable to get a hot reply. There the matter was allowed to rest.

From the very first day of the siege hundreds of families streamed out of Crater for other parts of Aden. After the first few days the flow decreased but, with the continuing three-cornered battles between the NLF, FLOSY and the surrounding troops, it stepped up again. Almost fifteen thousand, mostly women and children carrying all manner of household goods, passed through the road blocks in search of peace and security.

From his headquarters on a rise in the centre of the town Abdul Hadi Shihab, the senior Arab police officer, watched events in Crater with practised eyes. A born opportunist. He had long been in contact with the NLF and appreciated its lack of co-ordination and aspired to become its leader. Although the majority of the Aden Police sympathised with FLOSY, Abdul Hadi did not hesitate to use his position and resources to further the cause of the NLF. Despite this the balance of interfactional fighting was beginning to favour FLOSY so as the days passed Abdul Hadi saw the increasing possibilities of his organisation being wiped out and himself with it. He therefore began to work for the return of the British. As chief police officer he was in daily touch with the High Commissioner and Headquarters, Middle East and meaningful dialogue began to take place between him and Brigadier Dunbar, the dour Chief of Staff.

On the night of 2 July when the 'siege' was thirteen days old, Dunbar felt the time was ripe for an exploratory probe. A company of troops were landed by helicopter at Ras Marshag, a rocky promontory on the far side of the town and one hundred and twenty men of the Argylls moved in from the Marine Drive. The two forces joined up at the crossroads near several banks. One party smashed down the door of the Chartered Bank and rushed



32 General Philip Tower, accompanied by Police Commissioner Abdul Hadi Shihab, inspecting the Armed Police as a gesture of reconciliation following the mutiny.

to the roof from which they had a commanding position over the southern part of the town. The surprise had been complete. Only one sniper had resisted a fierce exchange of gunfire: he had been shot dead. The citizens of Crater awoke in the morning to the sound of Scottish pipers playing the reveille from the bank roof. The people of Crater were not the only ones to be surprised. The security of the operation, code named 'Stirling Castle' had been excellent. The High Commissioner barely knew of it and the Federal government had received notice ten minutes before it took place. The ease and panache with which the British took Crater astonished everybody, even the planners themselves. The Armed Police, who would have been the backbone of possible resistance, had remained in their barracks although they must have heard the initial shots.

In the following three days the Argylls, unopposed, took over control of the rear of the town and Crater was once again in British hands.

The extent of Armed Police involvement was still a mystery to the British and efforts were made to renew co-operation with them. It was decided that an inspection by a senior British officer should be carried out as a gesture to mark the reconnection. Initially it was envisaged that Lt Colonel Colin Mitchell, the commanding officer of the Argylls, take the

parade. In the event he deferred to General Philip Tower.* In the prevailing political atmosphere the parade may have been a sensible suggestion but the more emotional British correspondents who turned up for it did not think so. 'On the barrack square *(sic)* where a fortnight ago twelve British troops were killed in a mutiny . . . General Tower inspected . . .' was typical of several reports. In the coming weeks Colonel Mitchell's feel for publicity was to prove surer than his general's.

So the 'mutiny' came to an end and with it the Federal government staggered on to final disintegration: the South Arabian Army, having felt its strength, became a law unto itself; the tribes were finally convinced of British departure: the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders settled down to their controversial occupation of Crater. With sinking hearts political observers had noted that the whole time Crater was in the hands of the insurgents no leader had emerged—as time went on the chaos had only compounded itself.

* General Tower had succeeded the able and popular Sir John Willoughby.

Chapter IX

The Fall of the Sultans

3 July-3 September 1967

The Federal Government—it has gone with the wind.

Hussain Bayumi
28 July 1967

The Federal government were stunned. Privately many of them had doubted the reliability of the armed forces for some time. For the most part they had been content to keep their suspicions firmly under their turbans and preferred not to look too closely at what to many must have been a very unpleasant truth. The events of the 20 June had finally confirmed all their worst suspicions. The South Arabian forces, the pride of the Federal government and its main pillar of support, was revealed riddled with tribalism, utterly unpredictable and master unto themselves. If, during the confusions of the mutiny, a Federal minister had had the courage to go himself and try to pacify the rebellious troops or later the Federal government as a whole had possessed the will to purge the forces of unreliable elements, then events may have turned out differently. To embark on the last course would have been to take the bull by the horns. It may have precipitated further disturbances and even resulted in the immediate overthrow of the government. But it was the Supreme Council's last chance. By accepting the empty gesture of apology and by avoiding the principle issue at stake—the assertion of its authority—the Federal government surrendered the right to lead and the right to govern.

The South Arabian forces recognised the signs of weakness and realised that there was no fear of being held to account for their actions. In the coming weeks either by standing aside or by direct intervention they were to assist in sweeping their former masters from power and from South Arabia.

While the Federal government were reluctant to take firm action against their armed forces, the mutiny did impel them to take the initiative in trying to obtain a political solution with the militants. For many months the phrase 'broad based government' had been aired and now the Supreme Council realised that to survive they must widen their representation in an effort to present a more favourable image, both internally and internationally. For their part the British had been urging this course on the Federal government for some time. Appreciating the importance of recognition for the new regime they still hankered after participation in the

state-making by the United Nations. In order to convince the UN Mission sulking in New York of the sincerity of Britain's intentions, it was essential for the Federal government to put on a new look.

The decisive meeting of the Supreme Council was held on 5 July. Muhammad Farid, the suave Foreign Minister, began by carefully explaining the position and revealing that with a little wheeling and dealing a number of FLOSY members with whom he was in touch could be attracted into the government. He had reckoned without the bellicose Hussain Bayumi. The bull in a political china shop, Bayumi lacked understanding on the finer points of diplomacy and prided himself on his 'contacts' with militants in Aden. 'Empty talking,' he kept on shouting. 'I can bring in the NLF and FLOSY within a fortnight.' Eventually his interruptions had the effect of causing the Foreign Minister to lose his temper. 'All right,' he snapped back, 'you prove it—you do it.' It was a test of wills and not wishing to back down and look foolish Bayumi agreed. The Supreme Council promptly voted him Prime Minister designate with the task of forming a committee which would select the broad based government to accept independence from the British, and gave him twelve days in which to do it.

Bayumi set about his task with cheery optimism. In Aden his courage was greatly respected. He had known most of the FLOSY leaders all his life, although he had been on the worst of terms with most of them for the greater part of it. His chief hope lay in the NLF whose amorphous quality he recognised. Taking advantage of his position as Minister of Information, Bayumi issued appeal after appeal over the radio asking 'honest citizens' to come forth and join him in a bid to unite the country and save it from ruin.

His Khormaksar house with its high wire fence and sand-bagged gunpits became a campaign headquarters. Innumerable meetings were held, usually in the middle of the night, and a trail of prospective ministers, hangers-on and journalists trooped in to gain audience with the 'Prime Minister designate'. All were welcome but before obtaining their objective each had to brave a courtyard full of stray dogs, chickens and guards. Visitors were uncertain which peril was the more deadly, the snapping dogs or the South Arabian policemen who lolled around chewing qat and watching events with bored indifference, nonchalantly cradling their machine guns and occasionally breaking off to frisk a visitor or slaughter a goat for lunch. The names of every visitor to the Bayumi household at this time were carefully passed on to the militants.

Both the NLF and FLOSY were taken aback by the speed with which the Federal government had commissioned Bayumi. Consequently they were some days in preparing a reply and this hesitation gave rise to hope that the move had been successful. Elements of the Shaikh Uthman NLF, confused by the organisation's delay went so far as to contact Bayumi and arrange a midnight meeting. FLOSY were the first to make their position clear and denounced the move as the usual 'Imperialist plot'. The NLF were quick to follow, the Shaikh Uthman branch as if to make up for their apparent lack

of revolutionary ardour, were the most violent in their denunciations, threatening 'death to any South Arabian taking the offer up'.

Bayumi did have some takers. Amongst the first to come forward were the 'terrible twins', Naib Jaabil of Audhali and ex-Sultan Ahmad bin Abdulla of Fadhli. Since their defection from FLOSY in the previous autumn, these two had dreamt up something called 'The Front for the Liberation of South Arabia' which had the right sounding title but little size. Shaikh Ali Mussaid Babakri of Wahidi who had recently entered the Federal government as Minister of Aviation was the third recruit. A former junior political officer, he was described by a fellow minister as having the head of sheep, the brain of goat and the heart of lion. With that serious support ended.

Bayumi tinkered with the idea of bringing in the South Arabian Army. The officers refused, although they promised him their support. The prospect of one of their number being elected to ministerial rank with its unlimited opportunities for graft and nepotism filled them with alarm and threatened the already precariously balanced rank structure.

So Bayumi was forced to concentrate on his fellow Adenis. The cards were stacked against him. He suffered from the handicap of being a Federal minister. More important were the vociferous threats by the NLF and FLOSY and the fact that he could offer scant protection to any supporter. Consequently only the stupid and the recklessly ambitious came forward. One of these was promptly kidnapped by the NLF. A second, British trained lawyer Husain Aulaqi, for several days held forth in his braces to captive audiences in the Bayumi household but withdrew quickly at the first threat. Maurice Gent, who had succeeded Kenneth Brazier as Aden's BBC correspondent, was rung up at 2 am by a terrified Aulaqi who pleaded that news that he had withdrawn from Bayumi be broadcast as quickly as possible. 'Please,' he wailed, 'give your word as an Englishman that the announcement will be made as soon as possible.' Gent demurred and explained that he had no power over what the BBC did and did not put out, but Aulaqi was lucky—the BBC considered his resignation news and broadcast it the following morning.*

Several ministers who had confidently expected Bayumi to invite them to join him were much piqued when he didn't. It did not take them long to realise that in their haste they had given Bayumi the power to put them out of a job. Hurriedly they consulted the minutes of the Supreme Council and their fears were confirmed. Then cooler heads took over. Muhammad Obali, together with Muhammad Farid, ordered another set adding a vital paragraph to the effect that Bayumi's men had to be approved by the Supreme Council before they took power. Technically, as the minutes had not been passed, they were within their rights in doing so. Bayumi was furious and took off to confer with the Sharif in Baihan. On his return he

*21 July.

was handed a message at Aden Airport from the Supreme Council formally withdrawing his mandate on the grounds that he had overrun his time limit. Bayumi promptly banned the announcement from being broadcast over Aden Radio. He was then summoned to al Ittihad and after tortuous discussions persuaded to withdraw. He was granted permission to give a press conference.

The 'Prime Minister's' press conference had been something of a six-day wonder in Aden. Every morning for a week Bayumi had let it be known he would like to see the press at 2 pm every lunchtime, having been dissuaded by Federal representatives who rightly suspected he planned to produce the two sets of unfortunate minutes, he cancelled the appointment. The press, who had appreciated that his chances of forming a 'committee' were diminishing, were at first intrigued and then frustrated so that the final invitation on 28 July came as something of an anticlimax.

Bayumi received the correspondents in his ornate lounge in which monkey skin rugs vied for prominence with brass ornaments. He had promised his Federal colleagues that the whole thing would be buried as decently as possible but the presence of an interested and sympathetic audience proved too much of a temptation.

After reporting the failure of his mission he said, 'I have stepped down to save the Council's reputation and to avoid a further deterioration of the situation.' Then suddenly with a flourish he produced the two sets of minutes.

'No,' he said in answer to questions, 'I do not think that my colleagues have behaved dishonourably, they have merely forged the minutes.'

'Yes, I do consider that they [the Federal government] were a major obstacle in preventing the fulfilment of my mission.'

'No, I shall not bring the matter of forgery to the attention of the United Nations. I think that I have done enough for one day.'

All the while, an etching of Hussain Bayumi's brother Hassan, the Adeni pioneer of Federation, glowered down blackly at proceedings; doubtless he was turning in his grave.

When the Supreme Council heard of their Information Minister's outburst they were not surprised. 'We always said', they shrugged, 'that Bayumi was no good.' If the Federal government treated the Bayumi fiasco with equanimity then the High Commission did not.

Using the Bayumi move as evidence that the Federal government was willing to change its image, Sir Humphrey had left for New York to persuade the UN Mission to resume its good offices in South Arabia. His journey to New York had the additional advantage in that Mackawee was already there in surreptitious touch with the Mission, but in the event the two men did not meet.

FLOSY were increasingly worried about the influence of the NLF and as the time for independence drew nearer hoped to use the UN Mission to break into the government. To this end they were also continuing desultory contacts with the British but never seemed able to bring themselves to enter serious negotiations. As George Brown had pointed out, the times and

places at which FLOSY were meant to turn up were legion. Unfortunately they never seemed to arrive.

Alarmed at the FLOSY presence in New York and indications that things might be moving to a settlement with Britain, the NLF followed suit and on 25 July cabled the Mission announcing that it too was prepared to send a delegation to New York. Only a few days previously the NLF had condemned the High Commissioner's trip as 'an empty gesture' and on 21 July had cabled the Mission to say that it was unable to attend meetings in New York and vowed to continue the revolution. This change of heart was in itself a minor diplomatic triumph for Sir Humphrey who followed it up by exerting his not inconsiderable charm in persuading the Mission of Britain's sincerity in desiring a broad based government which included NLF and FLOSY participation. The three men then undertook to renew their mission and set off to Geneva to hear the evidence. No sooner did they arrive than the NLF changed its mind again and withdrew their earlier offer protesting against the presence of the sultans and stooge parties.

As can be imagined, Sir Humphrey was not best pleased when he heard the details of the Bayumi shambles and bluntly told the Supreme Council that they could not hope to exist on their own. His suggestion that they should go to Switzerland and present themselves to the UN Mission received a mixed reception. The Supreme Council's previous experiences with the Mission were no recommendation that they would receive a fair hearing on this occasion. Even so some of the rulers were secretly relieved. Odd things were happening in their states and the journey would provide the all important opportunity to save face and avoid trouble when it came.

Throughout the months of June, July and August the British troops upcountry were being withdrawn into Aden. One by one the garrisons at Baihan, Dhala, Makyras and lastly Habilain hauled down their flags and drove off down the dusty roads to Aden. They were never to return. The timing of their departure could not have been more unfortunate for the Federal government who were at their lowest ebb. Their British allies were going and above all were seen to be going. It only needed a spark to set the land aflame. The first one was to come from a totally unexpected quarter.

Apart from 'cabinet forming' Hussain Bayumi had other problems. As Federal Minister of Information he was responsible for the Aden Radio and Television Services. There had never been any question of these organs being impartial. Right from the start of the Emergency they had beaten the Federal drum and roundly condemned terrorism, the NLF, FLOSY and especially the Egyptians. Throughout British and Federal propaganda had been brilliantly orchestrated by Tony Ashworth, a former colonel turned civil servant. The militants were furious. Many attempts were made to blow the radio station up. In January 1967 PORF were successful in planting explosives which demolished most of the inside of the station. Vital technical equipment was virtually unharmed and after a brief interval of forty-five minutes the broadcasts continued unabated. Particular attention had been paid to the staff. Anonymous letters, threatening telephone calls and the ever-present possibility of assassination were the

lot of the announcers, but surprisingly all survived. Slowly the strain began to tell. At first commentators had declined to read the more violent denunciations* then, after April and the United Nations episode, staff began to join the innumerable strikes. To counter the threat, Bayumi had turned a room in his house into a makeshift studio. Here, during strikes, news and commentaries were taped by loyalists and played out over a radio station manned by a skeleton staff. In these activities as in most others Bayumi was greatly assisted by his wife. Adilla Bayumi was a star broadcaster and TV personality in her own right. Her steady voice was famous throughout the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula and never quavered as she denounced her husband's enemies.

The most enthusiastic broadcasters were the Yemenis. Nearly all of them were or had been Republicans, full of disillusionment and hate at the Egyptian occupation of their country. The flood of refugees to Aden had increased during and after the purges of October 1966. Amongst those to arrive were Abdullah Abyadh, the former Republican director of Sana Radio turned Royalist, and Muhammad Yazili, former director of Press and Publications who remained a supporter of Republican General Hassan al Amri. These two immensely tough and ruthless little men organised two programmes, 'Voice of the Yemen' and 'Cry of the Yemeni Revolution', which for six months daily castigated the Egyptian presence.

By their sheer violence, variety (there was never any shortage of Yemenis coming forward with harrowing tales of gas and torture) and wit,† the programmes soon had a wide audience. Vulgar, crude, but with that magic spark which compels listening, the programmes were amongst the most effective anti-Egyptian propaganda to be produced. Eventually President Nasser was moved to refer to them in one of his many speeches, and it seems that more privately he instructed his intelligence chiefs to deal with the matter. PORF were given the job. From the end of April to mid-July twenty-four of these broadcasters were assassinated and Bayumi was helpless to protect them. Still the volunteers came forward. Sadly Bayumi turned them away. The June war had called a pause in the Arab propaganda war and in any case the game was lost.

On 4 July the Qadhi Ghazzali was shot dead outside his Maalla House. A tall, imposing old man with a dyed red beard, he was never without his rosary and a brace of revolvers. A leader of the squabbling Aden Royalist Community, the most arresting feature about him was his English. For

*One of the first commentators to decline was Umar Girgirah, a nephew of the Adeni politician. As the young man was steadfast in his refusal he was eventually hauled before the Sharif of Baihan at that time acting as Minister of Information. The Sharif was sitting in his office quietly smoking a Gauloise. 'I understand, my son, that you have refused to read a commentary in defence of your country. Why is this?' 'Because father,' the young man replied, 'the NLF will kill me.' The Sharif blew a smoke ring and leaning forward tapped him on the knee. 'You must understand,' he said gently, 'it's not only the NLF that can shoot people.' After that, Aden Radio had a no more enthusiastic announcer than Umar Girgirah.

† A poem punning the name of the Egyptian Commander-in-Chief, Talat Hassan, which roughly translated means 'he who mounts well' became particularly famous.

seventeen years the Qadhi had followed the calling of a 'Muslim Hot Gospeller' in the Deep South of America. He never lost the idiom, inevitably referring to his enemies, and there were many, as 'Dem damn trash people'. The murder completely demoralised the Aden Royalists, following as it did hard upon the heels of that of a more famous companion.

The best known and most flamboyant of the Yemeni broadcasters was Royalist 'Major General' Shaikh Salih Ali Fidama. He had been at it for years. His raucous voice and frank expression had infuriated Nasserists and heartened their opponents since his defection from the Republic in 1963. Still a handsome man at fifty, he cut a striking figure and always dressed from turban to toe in startling black or white set off by an enormous dagger. His colourful appearance matched his career. Not least amongst the Shaikh's achievements was the attainment of the rank of Major in the German Army and winning an Iron Cross on the Russian Front in 1944. Quarrelsome, boastful and utterly fearless, he never bothered to hide his contempt for lesser beings and strode through the Adenis like a magnificent peacock amongst off-colour chickens. The Shaikh's refusal to take normal precautions brought about his end.

At the beginning of July he prepared to travel from Aden to Royalist Yemen and made no secret of the fact that he was carrying a large amount of money. The Shaikh broke his journey and spent the night at the Dathina village of Um Qulaiytch. In the morning Fidama bade his host farewell and ten minutes later was ambushed at point blank range as the Landrover struggled around a rocky outcrop. Within seconds the Shaikh's bullet-riddled body and that of his younger son and driver were dumped unceremoniously by the side of the road. The attacking tribesmen, cousins of Abdul Qadir al Sha'a, Naib of Dathina, quickly seized the cash and drove off in the Landrover, only to run into Fidama's late hosts who had come to find out what all the shooting was about. The attackers fobbed them off with an excuse that they were carrying out the orders of the Federal government and hurriedly departed.

A complaint was duly registered with the Naib and justice demanded. A guest had been murdered and the deed had taken place on the 'sacred' road and by tribesmen from another territory. The killing of this Royalist chieftain who nobody much cared for led directly to the collapse of Federal rule in Dathina and its takeover by the NLF.

Naib Abdul Qadir was in a quandary. The Federal government to whom he owed allegiance demanded an inquiry, a major tribe threatened to start a blood feud unless he took action, yet blood is thicker than water and the South Arabian Police on whom he had to rely thoroughly approved of the murder. The Naib prevaricated and at length the issue polarised into one between the Federal government and 'the people'. The people won.

Dathina was a hybrid, brought into being by the British in 1944 because the three main tribes refused to give their allegiance to anybody else. They were administered by a naib and by a feat of historical gymnastics called themselves the 'Oldest Republic in the World'. Hundreds of Dathinis went

down to Aden to work and many were attracted into the revolutionary movements. Dathinis shared with their Audhali neighbours the reputation of being the principal centres of NLF and FLOSY support outside Aden.

Consequently it was easy for the NLF to exploit the discontent caused by the Fidama affair. On 14 August several hundred tribesmen demonstrated in Mudia, the capital, storming the prison, they released the prisoners and helped by the South Arabian Police raised the NLF flag over the fort. Naib Abdul Qadir, who seems to have had foreknowledge of events, resigned and went back to farming. Significantly, four Federal ministers* left the same day for Geneva. The NLF in Dathina were emboldened in their action by reports of stirring events coming in from the west.

The Federal rulers had long considered Shaikh Qasim bin Abdul Rahman ('Muffles' to his friends), ruler of Muflahi State, as something of an odd fellow. Elderly, grizzled and forever trying to adjust a Wizard of Oz turban spangled with its galaxy of stars and crescents, he rivalled even Nasir, Sultan of Fadhli, for his performances in the marriage stakes. Here to all intents and purposes his usefulness ended. From his remote and mountainous little state he viewed all politics from the narrow standpoint of Upper Yafa's tangled tribal feuds. He had once defected to the Yemen and on return had been made to stand down in favour of his son Faisal. Unfortunately Faisal was almost as bad as father and the light of Federal administration and progress shone but dimly in their rocky eyrie of Khalla.

When news broke in Aden that Shaikh Qasim had been kidnapped, it was at first dismissed as one of his escapades. The day was Sunday, 13 August and the NLF had seized power in its first state. The South Arabian Army in Dhala, the nearest military base, was ordered to send a patrol to investigate but delayed an ominous four days before reluctantly carrying out its instructions. They installed Faisal and once again raised the Federal flag over Khalla Fort. A few days later Faisal too disappeared bound for an eventual fate working on a road gang 'for the good of the people'.

By this time events in Muflahi had lost their impact. The revolutionaries had struck much nearer home.

Of all the states in South Arabia Lahej was the biggest and its sultans the proudest. In perhaps no other state had the ruling family drifted so far apart from their people. They lived in shabby splendour and could not conceive a time when sultans would no longer exist. Consequently their political vision was introspective and concentrated on intrigue within the family. Over the past decade Lahej had been unfortunate in its rulers. The young Sultan, Fadl Abdul Karim, was a megalomaniac, a character defect which caused him to tie two cousins to stakes in his garden and use them for target practice. For this outrage he was deposed by the British and exiled to Jiddah. He was succeeded by his brother, Ali Abdul Karim. Sultan Ali was personable, intelligent but recklessly ambitious and aspired to become the

* Naiqa, Obali, Girgirah and Bayumi.

ruler of all South Arabia through the agency of the South Arabian League and when these plans failed he went off into exile. Thoroughly alarmed at the quirks of their young rulers the Lahej electoral college played safe next time and selected the steady middle-aged Fadhl bin Ali. In a quieter age this choice would have been excellent but these were times of trouble and a tough resolute character was needed at the helm. Sultan Fadhl never aspired to be more than he was: a country landowner, and like his forebears before him, he treated Lahej as a personal fief. In the spring of 1967 of two hundred and twenty irrigation pumps at work in the Lahej Oasis, a hundred and ninety belonged to the Sultan.

Sultan Fadhl soon upset his family. Lahej's palaces were filled with unmarried daughters of the ruling house who were considered to be too highly born to be married to any old shaikh. So they were far from pleased when Sultan Fadhl married Halla, a pretty Jordanian schoolteacher whose progressive ideas did not include that traditional diversion of sultans, polygamy.

Because of the threat to his position from nephew Ali Abdul Karim the Sultan, together with most of his family, had a fixation about the South Arabian League. They did not hesitate to take advantage of the League's long periods of unpopularity with other militants operating from the Yemen. A glance at the map shows Lahej to have by far the longest border of any state with the Yemen. Yet throughout the Emergency the number of attacks on Laheji forts were few and ineffective. An attempt to blow up Sultan Fadhl as he drove to his Dar Saad palace, a bazooka attack in Lahej and the Shaikh Uthman ambush of the Lahej police chief, Colonel Ali bin Ahmad, were all the work of the South Arabian League who returned the Sultan's feelings with interest.

In March 1966 the Lahej government were rumoured to be donating useful amounts of money to the FLOSY war chest and a year later senior members of the ruling family met FLOSY chiefs in a secret meeting in the village of Waht. By force of geography all arms reaching Aden from the Yemen had to pass through Lahej territory. After the Beswick announcement in February 1966 none were ever captured. The villages of Waht and Dar Saad, just over the border from Aden, were notorious as terrorist arms stores and bolt holes. Raids on these places by British and Federal troops always produced negative results. It almost seemed as if they were expected.

The precise details of what happened in Lahej are unclear On the 13 August demonstrators first appeared on the streets, apparently protesting against a decision of the civil court. As the days passed the demonstrations increased in number and violence. The prison was stormed and its occupants released while the court itself was sacked. The two hundred strong Laheji government militia who dignified themselves with the grand title of 'The Lahej State Police', tied up their officers and went on strike. The Sultan's naib in Lahej, the clever grasping Amir Abdullah bin Ali, realised that the game was up and fled through the night to Aden.

The mob and the militants took over. As always there were too many contenders to the claim that they had overthrown the sultans. Within a day fierce little gun battles were being fought up and down the state between the supporters of FLOSY, the NLF and SAL.

The man chosen to restore order in Lahej was Colonel Ali bin Ahmad, Assistant commissioner of the South Arabian Police and nephew of the Sultan. Of a younger generation, quick to point out the defects of the old, Colonel Ali bluntly told his uncle that he did not intend to restore order to place the sultans back in power. The Colonel who had a well earned reputation for being ruthless and decisive had been called in months too late.

A battalion of the South Arabian Army was sent to Lahej to reinforce the South Arabian Police and help the Colonel. They did neither.

Other than impose a truce amongst the warring factions the Army declined to arrest malefactors, or seize stores of 'illegal' arms. Within a few days Colonel Ali realised his task was hopeless. Compelled to drive through streets bedecked with NLF and FLOSY flags and powerless even to remove a large notice hung over the gate of the empty prison which proclaimed him to be a 'stooge and tail of imperialism' the Colonel became hollow-eyed and his normal healthy complexion turned grey with fatigue.

At this stage he was found by the press touring the Federation at the request of the Federal government.

On the 16 August the BBC broadcast a Reuter report that the NLF had seized control in four states, Shaib, Muflahi, Dhala and Lahej. The Federal government were most upset. They were advised that if the reports were untrue as they maintained the best way to disprove them was to send a party of journalists *en tour* to each of the states concerned. Although most of the rulers present, which included the Sultan of Lahej, must have known that there was some foundation in the reports, they readily agreed. A helicopter was obtained and three journalists* accompanied by a British major with the South Arabian Army, a member of the High Commission and two boxes of ammunition, set off for the last trip by Britons around the western area of the Federation before independence.

First stop was Habilain. Strangely forlorn, the last British units had departed a fortnight before. Traffic at the huge airstrip, once the busiest in the Federation, was almost at a standstill. Even the giant Beverley transport which some months previously had struck a mine on take off and had lain at the end of the runway like some giant silver bird with a broken wing, had gone.

The South Arabian Army's Commander in the West, Colonel Muhammad Ahmad Hassani, received the journalists, treated them to the obligatory soft drinks and explained that all was quiet. And it was, deadly quiet.

*S Bonner, AP, M Gent, BBC, K Ludlow, VicNews.

The party flew on to Awaabil, administrative centre of Shaib. The helicopter left the Dhala Road behind. Climbing higher and higher into the mountains the passengers peering through the windows had a bird's eye view of some of the roughest country in the world. Black brown hills with razor sharp ridges stretched as far as the eye could see, bisected by deep narrow wadis. Occasionally there was a flash of green where cultivation had been attempted or a glimpse of a tiny fort with a hamlet huddled for protection around it. This was Halmain, never administered even by the venturesome British and the home of people as old and hard as their mountains.

Awaabil is a pleasant surprise. Sprinkled high on the edge of a cliff overshadowed by another, local legend has it that this is the first town that God made and although the irreverent add that it doesn't seem He has been back since it is not easy to understand how the place has survived. Unable to scratch a living from their own barren soil, hundreds of Shaibis have emigrated abroad to seek their fortunes. Thriving communities can be found in Cardiff, Sheffield and Birmingham. Others have gone further afield to the United States and South East Asia. Only rarely does a Shaibi settle permanently in the land of his work. Most return to Shaib.

Awaabil is dominated by the Naib's Castle. A large brown fort whose grim visage seems to promise tales of dark deeds and deep dungeons. This contrasts with the Beau Geste headquarters of the South Arabian Army just up the road whose mortars point purposefully towards the Yemen a few miles away across the gorge.

The press were enchanted. The clean air, champagne to Aden's bad burgundy, was in itself enough to cheer them up. They trooped off happily into the town to chat with friendly people who as always mostly consisted of women, children and old men. The younger men were either abroad or with the rebels. What the journalists did not know was that the day before the South Arabian Army had politely told the Naib that it could no longer support him and that even as they wandered around Naib Yahya was frantically packing his goods and chattels. Neither did they realise that the polite man in the Robin Hood hat and revolver who had greeted them by the Army fort had quickly stuffed an NLF flag into his shirt to avoid giving offence to these unexpected guests. The helicopter overflew Muflahi being unable to land as the South Arabian Army had only that morning found time to carry out its orders and send a patrol to investigate the kidnapping of Shaikh Qasim. The helicopter flew low over Khalla Fort and the journalists were reassured by the sight of a Federal flag being raised fron the tower.

After Awaabil, Dhala was a return to the normal atmosphere of tension, suspicion and doubt. The party landed and were driven straight to army headquarters where they were entertained in the officers' mess and later taken to the house of Muhammad Qasim, the young NLF-inclined political officer. Their requests to visit the Amir and the town were firmly refused. To put it mildly the situation had been delicate for some time.

The town of Dhala clusters around the sides of a small hill overshadowed by the magnificent bulk of Jebel Jihaf. The squat brown houses are surmounted by the imposing white palace of the ruler. The walls of this building bore the scars of over forty bazooka shells—the Amir always dryly referred to these as 'South Arabian air conditioning'.

Shaaful bin Ali, CMG, Amir of Dhala, was a small slight man with soulful brown eyes and tremendous pluck. For nearly twenty years he had ruled his state with skill and energy. He was only too well aware of the necessity of keeping a balance between the tribes, who were amongst the most factious and vicious in all Arabia. The biggest of these, the Shairi, had an unenviable reputation for treachery and violence and did not hesitate at the murder of holy men or the robbery of any unfortunate pilgrim who strayed into their hands. They had no time for administration except as a source of presents and regarded their neighbours as mere vassals to be pillaged at will. They were always ripe for revolt and formed the mainstay of the rebel gangs based just across the border in Qataba.

It had been a perennial problem for the rulers of Dhala to keep these troublesome people in control; the Amir's predecessor, Haidar, had relied on terror, but Shaaful preferred diplomacy backed up by the threat of force. Most of the deterrent had been removed by the final withdrawal of British troops in June and he now relied on the South Arabian Army, with whom he was personally popular.

It was in Dhala on the day of the mutiny that the first signs of the impending break up of the Federal government appeared. The whole town buzzed with rumours of what was happening in Aden. A group of the younger soldiers from the army garrison began to mill around shouting revolutionary slogans and it was some time before their officers could regain control of them.

The chief Shairi rebel gang in the area was led by one Ali Antar.* Grasping and completely ruthless, he was a born leader and skilful fighter. Piqued at having been summoned to Taiz to explain the attempted murder of a rival,† he had recently transferred his allegiance from FLOSY to the NLF. He watched events in Dhala with a close interest. Seeing the army preoccupied with itself and the general situation full of possibility, Antar took his chance. Marching with twenty of his gang, all heavily armed, to the Amir's palace, he demanded that the two British political officers in the town should be made to leave that day.

With the army still arguing in their camp the Amir was in no position to refuse and messages were sent to the two men to get away as quickly as possible.

* Antar is the nickname of Ali Ahmad Nasir al Bishi, now (1983) the Minister of Defence for the People's Democratic Republic of the Yemen.

† Ali bin Ali Hadi.

Major Paxton and Captain Butler had heard the rumours from Aden, were uncertain of the attitude of the army and so sensibly hastened to comply. Until a few weeks previously both had had their wives living with them in the square stone houses defiantly flying the Union Jack. Now they had only a few hours to pack. By mid-afternoon they were gone, taken by helicopter to Aden, leaving behind Mrs Butler's guitar propped against the doorway of the house.

Well pleased with his afternoon's work Antar returned to his village, contenting himself with raising the Yemeni flag over the market place on his way.

As the days passed it became more and more apparent that the army would do nothing positive to keep the peace and the Amir was losing his grip. One by one his naibs resigned or melted away. By mid-August the Amir was confined to his palace protected by a company of the army while the rebels looted the shops at will.

The Amir staunchly rejected pleas by the army to retire to Aden, and so placed the soldiers in a dilemma. They had more than a sneaking regard for the Amir who was under their protection, on the other hand, due to the uncertainties of the general political situation, they had no wish to tangle with the rebels who might end up as their political masters. Likewise Antar and his men readily appreciated that if they attacked the army they would almost certainly come off worst.

The hiatus was broken whilst the Amir was away on a visit to Aden to ask for help. His brothers, Muhsin and Fadhl, were lured down to the army camp and compelled to agree to leave. The only condition was that the army would give protection to the Amir's womenfolk and possessions.

A convoy of three-tonners wound up the hill to the palace. On the way back the drivers stopped the trucks in the market place and the soldiers stood by whilst the mob looted the Amir's goods and stripped his womenfolk of their ornaments.

At the time of the press visit on 17 August the Amir was still holding out in his palace.

After Dhala the journalists concluded their trip in Lahej where they interviewed a tired Colonel Ali Ahmad in a garden taken over as a military headquarters. Then they returned to Aden.

Reports were duly written and broadcast to the effect that although there had clearly been trouble in the four states everything seemed quiet and under the control of the South Arabian Army which was then still identified with the Federal government. It had been the Federal government's last gamble and although it had partially come off it did them little good. In fact they had lost control over the whole Western area and they were shortly to be toppled from power in the East.

As the hot and tired journalists were leaving the airfield to write their despatches, another blow was struck at Federal power, this time near al Ittihad itself.

Captain Jeff Jefferson was well known in the corridors of al Ittihad where he worked as an administrative officer with Federal Intelligence. Stolid and capable, he was one of the most cautious men in Aden. On the daily fourteen-mile drive in his battered red Dauphine he would never stop to pick up Arab hitch-hikers and as he passed through the squalid little shanty village of al Hizwa one hand never strayed far from a loaded automatic in the pocket. As usual at 1.20 pm Jefferson left work, drove down to the main road, passed through Hizwa village and was never seen alive again. When he did not arrive home for lunch his friends became worried and organised a search. In time his body was found slumped in the seat of his car. He had been killed instantly by a burst from a machine gun. From information gathered later it is almost certain that the Dauphine was followed out of al Ittihad by an open blue sports car which overtook it on the other side of Hizwa village, a passenger letting fly with a burst of light machine gun fire as it did so. It was over in a flash. The Dauphine ploughed off the road into the desert while the sports car passed on its way. So quickly and efficiently was the murder carried out that colleagues of Jefferson's passing the scene not more than three minutes later noticed the car well off the road, mused thet it might be Jefferson, but dismissed the thought as the car looked too dirty and knew that the Captain would not of his own accord have left the road.

The reason for the killing was not hard to find. A few weeks previously the Intelligence Office driver Hassan had been unmasked as a senior member of PORF. He was responsible amongst other things for laying the mine for Sir Richard Turnbull's helicopter on that last Federal Day* parade back in February and the 'drainpipe' mortar attacks on the Federal ministers' houses at the time of the UN Mission.† Hassan had been whisked away to Fort Morbut. His friends presumably sought revenge, accomplished by the murder of Jefferson.

With the death of their administrative officer coupled with the fact that the Supreme Council to whom they reported had ceased to function, the Federal Intelligence apparatus folded up.

Professional terrorism with lone Britons as targets was on the increase. Two days afterwards an RAF sergeant was shot while being served with petrol in Maalla's Esso station. A few minutes later two other RAF men suffered a similar fate as they wheeled their Lambretta in for repair to the BP station opposite, one, not more than twenty, managed to gasp 'he wore black trousers' before he died. For some time lone killers had been loose in Steamer Point.

On the 12 July Norman Pritchard, the British manager of an Aden shipping company, was shot in the back of the head; within a few days Bill Curtis, an information officer, was killed in the same way whilst on a lone

* See Chapter IV.

† See Chapter VI.

shopping expedition before returning home: Michael Booth, an accountant with the British Bank of the Middle East, was lucky to escape with a bullet in the face, and on the 21 August a soldier of the Prince of Wales' Own was shot in the back in the tiny bookshop opposite the High Commission as he was selecting magazines for his friends on guard. A day later twenty pounds of gelignite was discovered in the Aden Government Secretariat after an anonymous telephone call. If it had exploded it may have caused great loss of Arab life, and as always it was the Adenis who suffered most for the continuation of terrorism. In the months of July and August fifty-eight Adenis, including four women and four children, were killed by the revolutionaries, and a further forty-eight 'terrorists' were shot by British troops, as opposed to a total of eleven British deaths.

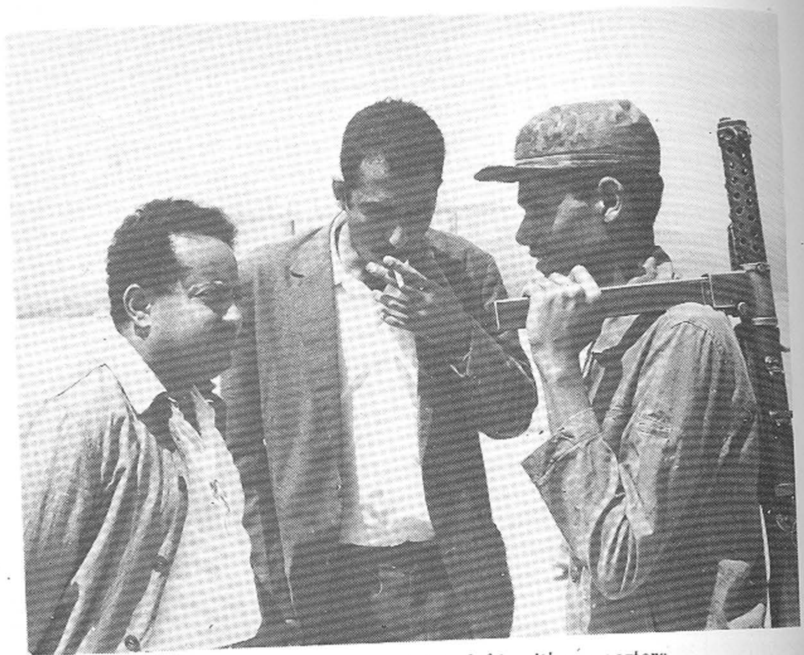
As a result of the August killings Middle East Command tightened up security instructions, virtually confining their men to camp and the High Commission withdrew its officers still living outside the wire into secure areas.

Whilst the NLF and its associates had been seizing power in the states, FLOSY had not been idle. In the first week in August Asnag, Mackawee and Basindwah, amongst others, had held an important meeting in Taiz and decided to take advantage of diminishing Federal control with an armed invasion across the border. First they had to deal with trouble amongst their own supporters.

Egyptian instructors training the 'FLOSY Liberation Army', presumably because they did not know what to do with their charges, suggested they practise digging trenches. The six hundred South Arabians replied hotly that they were not workmen and the only holes they were prepared to dig were Egyptian graves. With that the Egyptians bolted. The real cause of the trouble was that the troops hadn't been paid for two months and many were deserting. Asnag had brought the necessary cash from Cairo and after brief negotiation the matter was solved.

FLOSY were unfortunate in their military adventures. Their first probe was a raid by sixty heavily armed men against the border village of al Hazza. Almost the last remaining supporters of the Amir of Dhala, the villagers flung back their attackers in a fierce night battle. They were helped at the decisive moment by pro-NLF elements who thereafter claimed their allegiance.

FLOSY's next venture was more ambitious and led by Asnag and Basindwah themselves. Acting against the advice of their military advisers, on the 14 August they moved over the border and seized the Laheji border post of Kirsh. Two days later Taiz Radio issued a manifesto from 'Liberated Territory' but by this time FLOSY had already been driven out. In response to a Federal request, Hunters of the Royal Air Force had swept low over Kirsh. This was enough for Basindwah who leapt into a Landrover and together with £14,000 worth of Federal customs dues led the retreat back over the border. His men were not slow to follow. A similar invasion into Audhali also failed. The next FLOSY effort, carried out



33 Abdullah al Asnag, the leader of FLOSY, (left), with supporters.

mainly by PORF, was to be more successful.

Fadhl Muhsin, the Naib of the Haushabi Sultanate, was much disturbed. Half-addled with qat and knee-deep in intrigue, he had long ago learnt that revolution could be profitable to the faithful. He probably started like many another who had realised that the British Treasury only pays out when trouble actually occurs, by shooting up his own forts. This practice came to a sharp halt with the establishment of a permanent Federal Army camp in the area. There were, however, other practices which were equally lucrative. With the full co-operation of his young master, Sultan Faisal bin Sarur, he opened negotiations with everybody—Yemenis, Egyptians, Royalists, FLOSY and the NLF, to facilitate the passing of arms across his territory through which ran the main road from Aden to Taiz.

These machinations certainly involved the most influential person in the state—the Sultan's mother. Sharp as a needle with a keen eye for anything connected with money from a rifle to a tractor, this old dame was held in awe by both her son and his naib.

If the rulers of Haushabi were to be considered eccentric, then it was a trait they shared with their people, whose saucerlike eyes and sloping foreheads give a profound impression of their intellectual capacity. Haushabi ran several dissident gangs. A great deal of fuss would be caused and many fierce battles fought but the perceptive noted there were rarely



any casualties. Every now and then one of these gangs would surrender a large quantity of mines and grenades and collect a suitable reward from a grateful Federal government.

Sayid Muhammad Ubaid was the most noted Haushabi rebel. Very much a dissident of the old school, his self-appointed mission was to drive out the infidel from the sacred soil. The complete xenophobia of the Holy Man appealed to his fellow countrymen. His creed forbade any intercourse with the foreigner and much to their chagrin extended the principle to the Egyptians. The story goes that whenever Sayid Ubaid found it necessary to converse with his own arms suppliers he would only consent to do so through a curtain so that he would not have to look upon the faces of the infidels! It must be added that there have been recorded cases, especially when money was being distributed, that Sayid Ubaid contrived to overcome these sensitivities.

By the first week of August things were getting on top of Naib Fadhl Muhsin. The slow tempo of former days had gone, things were happening far too quickly and he found difficulty in keeping up. More and more he recoursed to the bottle of date toddy which he kept hidden under the pink and blue cushions of his reception chamber. The final blow came when he heard that a strong force of NLF were marching over the mountains with the avowed intention of seizing him and declaring Haushabi for the NLF. The Naib had been confidently expecting FLOSY and the news that they had been driven out of nearby Kirsh coinciding with the desertion of half his guards can hardly have cheered him up. He then panicked, and sent an incomprehensible telegram to al Ittihad demanding help but either forgot or couldn't bring himself to mention from whence the danger came. As puzzled army officers pored over the telegram the Naib prepared to scuttle.

He had left it too late, the NLF were upon him, led by none other than Faisal al Shaabi, the hard-eyed nephew of Qahtan, and Muhammad al Bishi, organiser of the Dhala stronghold of the NLF in the Wadi Buran. Fifty NLF 'commandos' swarmed into the Haushabi capital of Musaiymir and after a short, sharp struggle they captured the Naib and forced his remaining guards to surrender. After this comparatively easy victory the NLF left a few men in the fort and marched out together with the Naib and several other prisoners. As they were crossing the wide wadi in which Musaiymir stands like an island, the NLF were taken utterly by surprise by PORF and were completely routed. Perhaps a dozen* were killed. The rest fled or, together with the two leaders, were taken prisoner. The PORF column, some one hundred strong, had crossed the frontier a day previously and headed straight for Musaiymir. There is more than a suspicion that they had made some arrangements with the Naib with whom they had long been in touch. At all events if they had, they no longer

*Estimates vary between seven and fifteen.

honoured it and the unfortunate Naib remained bound and trussed and was hauled off to Taiz. Here he was released and immediately faded from public view.

Delighted at their victory and especially their prisoners, PORF turned back for Taiz, driving through the night straight up the main road to Kirsh. Here they made a fatal mistake.

The South Arabian Army had been sent to Kirsh following the FLOSY take over and subsequent expulsion. They had taken up positions commanding the road along which PORF planned to break through back to the Yemen. There was no need for PORF to attack, they could easily have slipped round. Perhaps they were over-confident following their recent success, perhaps they merely bumped into the army in the dark, nobody knows, but a savage battle erupted on the road. The army had brought up a Saladin armoured car and this quickly knocked out the two leading Landrovers. PORF then wisely abandoned the road and in scattered bands fought their way to safety across the border, taking their prisoners with them. In the morning the sun rose to reveal two burnt-out trucks and fifteen* PORF bodies, a further body of an unidentified man bound and gagged was found in a ditch by the road. The army didn't escape lightly and had five dead and a number of wounded. This was the first time the army had taken strong action against the militants for months and the incident raised hopes in Federal hearts that all was not lost.

Yet the army had been forced to fight by the PORF action and were not to repeat the performance. They were furious with FLOSY and the incident must have weighed heavily in the scales when later the army had to choose between them and the NLF.

So by 20 August the traditional rulers of all major states in the West had been overthrown. Other than the abortive FLOSY raid on Kirsh no attempt was made anywhere to set up an administration to replace the discredited Federal government. Intertribal fighting disguised as NLF and FLOSY broke out almost immediately in the 'newly liberated' areas, being particularly bloody in Dhala. The army continued undecided although many of its soldiers were taking time off to fight with one faction or another. The west had always been turbulent and development such as it was had not changed the lives of the people. The central area, consisting of Audhali, Lower Yafa', Fadhli and Dathina, were different in so much as the state administrators were more sophisticated and development, particularly in agriculture, more advanced. Fadhli and Lower Yafa' between them share the new fertile Abyan Basin where in twenty years the genius of British administration had transformed barren desert into rich cotton land, some of the poorest tribesmen in South Arabia becoming the richest as a result. This development was to a certain extent reflected in

* Other PORF men are reported to have later died of their wounds in the nearest Yemeni village of Rahida.

Dathina which, as has already been described, became the second state to declare for the NLF. To the north Audhali, divided into two by the towering plateau which overshadows the Lodar plain, was considered to be the best administered and most ably governed of all.

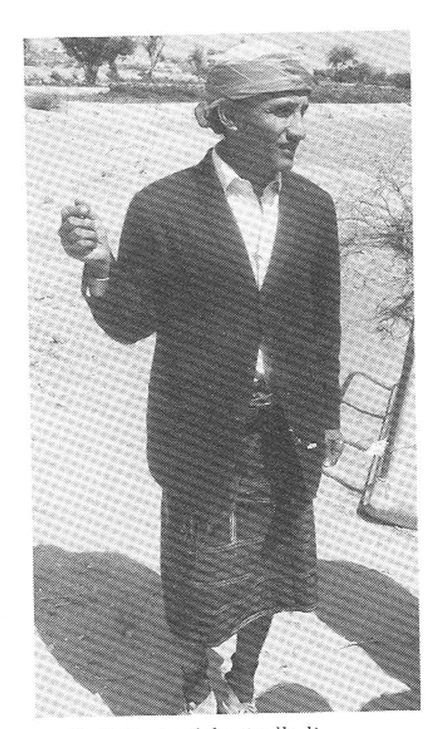
The Audhali rulers were strong and capable, although like the country they were divided into plateau and plain. At their head presided Sultan Salih bin Hussain who concentrated most of his energies in shoring up the Federal government delegating the task of ruling the state to two naibs. High on the plateau facing the Yemeni border his brother the Naib Jaabil ruled from the market town of Makairas. Jaabil knew no borders as rebels based on Baidha in nearby Yemen soon found to their cost. He was a famous fighter and for him the principle of an eye for an eye was a rule of life never to be ignored. He was also tiny, cocksure and more than a little gullible, weaknesses brilliantly exploited by the Egyptian Colonel Hamuda who arranged his defection in 1964.* In time Jaabil saw the light and returned but his escapade and subsequent intrigues had seriously weakened the family's position in the state.

On the plain below his cousin the Naib Nasir bin Muhammad held sway. Nobody who has ever seen this grim little man padding in basketball boots across the tarmac of Khormaksar airport in the grey mists of an Aden dawn, a rifle or machine gun wrapped in a polythene bag slung across his shoulders could even doubt his toughness or complete ruthlessness. Cold blooded and without the humour of his cousin, he was perhaps the most able of all and knew it. It was Naib Nasir who was left to face the revolutionary storm, Sultan Salih having left for medical treatment in London and Jaabil for the United Nations in Geneva. He might have survived had it not been for one man.

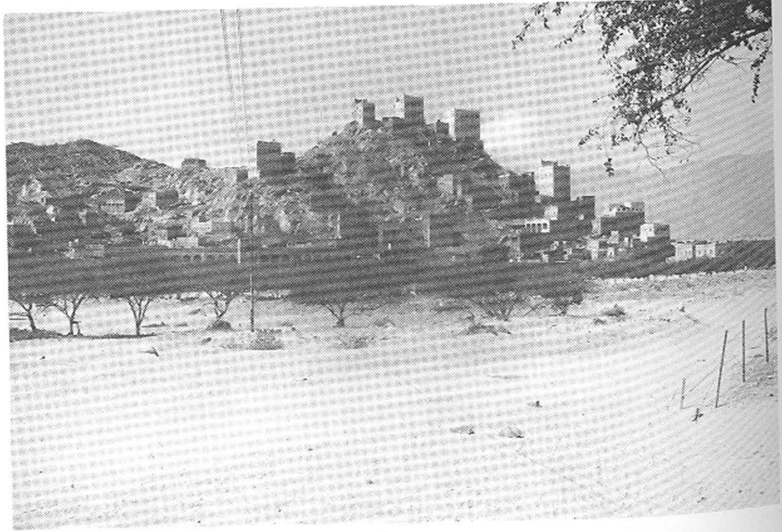
For years Ja'abal Aqil of the Am Sha'airi sub-tribe of the Audhalis had been an implacable enemy of the ruling family. The original reason for his hatred is lost in the dark recesses of tribal past. His familiar tall stooping figure gave off an odour of all-pervading malevolence and every waking hour seems to have been spent devising ways to encompass their downfall. His high rasping voice was often heard querulously complaining of some injustice, real or imagined, at their hands. To Ja'abal am Sha'airi the advent of the revolution was a godsend. From very early on he was in contact with the Egyptians, facilitating the quiet passage of arms and men down the Audhali cliff beneath which he lived. Nowhere outside Aden did the NLF have a more effective leader and few did more to bring about the ruin of the Federation than this embittered old man.

His activities had long been suspected but always under-estimated as mere tribalism because of his well known antipathy and it says a great deal for Egyptian security that Naib Jaabil, for eighteen months a rebel leader,

* See Chapter III.



34 *Naib Nasir of the Audhali*



35 *Zara, stronghold of the Audhali Sultans.*

never guessed his namesake's importance. Apart from the organisation of arms smuggling he encouraged his followers in Aden to indulge in terrorism,* promising sanctuary should they ever be forced to flee. Naturally his main effort was always directed at the Audhali rulers. A water pump was blown up here, a tractor destroyed there, the odd mine was laid on the roads. Small things kept at bay by the competence of Naib Nasir and the fear that if he showed his hand too much the retribution for the Aqil of the Am Sha'airi would be swift and violent. When Dathina declared for the NLF the Aqil knew his chance had come, threw off his mask and called for the tribes to join him.

History turns on small things. One may wonder if the course of events would have been changed if the ruling family had been more generous to their tribesmen on the occasion of the previous *Id*. Instead of handing out the traditional gifts of rifles and bullets much in demand for festive *feu de joie* on these occasions they had insisted on selling them although there were supplies aplenty. As a result there was general dissatisfaction and although in the beginning few rallied to the Aqil, none rallied to the Naib.

Nothing loath Nasir leapt into a Landrover and headed for Aden. This was the decisive moment. Together with Fadhl bin Ali he drove to Government House and asked the High Commissioner for the Royal Air Force to bomb two villages. Sir Humphrey demurred. Fadhl bin Ali repeated the request in his capacity as Federal Minister of Defence. Sir Humphrey again declined and stated he would require the request from the South Arabian Army before he would agree. The Defence Minister argued the army was subject to his orders. Sir Humphrey suggested he order the army to make the request. No request was forthcoming. The British were not in the habit of bombing villages without due warning and were now convinced that the Federation was done for. This was the decisive moment, if they had succeeded they may have put back the complete victory for revolution until after independence. The feeling prevailed that too many British lives had already been lost to no purpose. The object was to get as many out as possible and avoid further involvement. There was a risk. The traditional authorities provided the only proper administration; the chaos which was taking its place may well have engulfed the British, leading to far greater casualties. That it didn't is a tribute to the High Commissioner's diplomatic sixth sense. Even so the incident does little to encourage those who persist in the belief that Britain always stands by her friends in their hour of need.

If Naib Nasir had returned to Audhali immediately after hearing the High Commissioner's refusal all may still have been well. The ruling family alone numbered more than three hundred men, their capital of Zara was virtually impregnable and they were well supplied with arms and ammunition. The blow had been psychological rather than material and

* Ali Jabri Audhali, the man responsible for the Maalla bomb amongst them.

the Naib resigned himself to defeat and sulked around Aden for a vital three days. By the time he had regained heart his followers had fled, the rebels had seized his capital and captured the arms which his family had been at such pains to preserve. When the tribesmen broke down the Zara arms store they found several hundred rifles and over a million rounds of ammunition as well as a few machine guns. Henceforth Audhali was to be the centre from which the NLF were to extend their influence to the East.

The fall of the Audhalis was the death blow to the Federal government and the repercussions were immediately felt in the neighbouring states of Lower Yafa' and Fadhli.

Before Sultan Nasir of Fadhli had left for Geneva he had given orders to release the leading rebels held in his jail. The reason for this gesture is unknown. He may have already been coming to some agreement with the militants and hoped to stave off personal disaster by a quick accommodation. When the news of the Audhali debacle reached Zingibar, the state administrative capital, the former Sultan Ahmad realised that his only chance was to try and gather support from the tribes in the north east of the state. He knew that the de-tribalised Abyan delta was riddled with NLF cells and he could expect little help from them. Travelling fast in a convoy of Landrovers Ahmad held a tribal meeting at Am Surra near the border with Audhali. He declared himself for FLOSY, the first sultan to do so and gained promises of support. Turning back, the former ruler and his party were ambushed on the Urqub Pass by the Qashmimis, a band of semi-political bandits who had long been a thorn in the side of the administration. What happened is lost in legend. According to some Ahmad leant out of his Landrover and personally shot the leader of the attackers, Ali Lahman Qasmimi, dead. It seems more likely, however, that Ali Lahman was firing a bren gun from behind cover when the bipod collapsed and the bullets ricocheted off the rocks striking him in the face. At all events he was killed and his men dispersed. Ahmad, learning for the first time that Zingibar had declared against him and the Audhali NLF in force were coming down the road fast with the avowed intention of stringing him up, wisely decided to cut across country to the safety of Aulaqi and Baihan. Afterwards even pro-NLF Fadhli tribesmen boasted of his exploits, contrasting the performance of 'their sultans' with those of Audhali.

The much maligned Shaikh Ali Atif was at this time Chairman of the Supreme Council. Hearing rumours of the NLF takeover of Fadhli he decided that his place was at the side of his young master, Sultan Mahmud bin Aidrus of Lower Yafa', when many of his more illustrious colleagues had taken themselves abroad: he never got there. As his Landrover turned a bend on the road to Ja'ar it found a roadblock. A party of twenty-five armed men stepped out from their hiding places and the Minister's guards flung up their hands in surrender. He had been betrayed by his driver, who, annoyed at a refusal for a pay rise, had sent word ahead to the Fadhli NLF. Shaikh Ali Atif was the first Federal minister to fall into NLF hands. The

young Sultan Mahmud was taken the same afternoon. The capture of these two Yafai notables, one by Fadhlis, carried the seeds of future trouble which was at that time hidden by the general chaos. The Yafais are probably the most intensely tribal people of all South Arabia and although they said little in the first flush of revolutionary triumph, they did not forget that the Fadhlis of all people had laid hands on one of their chieftains.

With the NLF takeover in the central area they held nine of the states. Those still in the hands of the Federal authorities were in the east and consisted of Aulaqi, Wahidi and Baihan. Muhammad Farid, the Aulaqi Foreign Minister, en route to the United Nations, had broken his journey in Cairo and come to some agreement with FLOSY. From then on the Aulaqis, who mostly remained loyal to their rulers and included a powerful block of South Arabian Army officers, counted themselves as supporters of FLOSY.

The Federal government was finished. In a desperate attempt to save something from the wreck, Shaikh Ali Musaid Bubakri, who succeeded the unfortunate Shaikh Ali Atif as Chairman, asked the army to take over. They were too deeply divided themselves to accept. Shaikh Ali Musaid then left Aden for Wahidi where he too declared for FLOSY and rallied the tribesmen to fight the local South Arabian Police who had turned NLF.

The only Federal minister left in Aden was the Sultan of Lahej and he had gone into hiding. Bayumi, ebullient as ever, returned from Geneva to join him, announcing that he was willing to stay in office until 'the will of the people was implemented.' He had no illusions as to the fate of the Federal government, and his views were shared by the High Commissioner.

Sir Humphrey Trevelyan flew to London to explain the position. On his return on the 4 September in a broadcast over Aden Radio he put the official seal on the end of the Federal government of South Arabia, declared that Britain recognised 'the nationalist forces as representatives of the people' and was ready to have immediate discussions with them. The subject of these talks would, he said, include British recognition of 'an effective Government formed by the nationalist forces', withdrawal of British forces and the carrying out of the United Nations' Resolutions for the area.

In the few days before Sir Humphrey made his historic broadcast, FLOSY and the NLF were in a state of open warfare. Qahtan Ash Shaabi, the legendary NLF leader released from detention in Egypt, had given his first press conference in Zingibar, the east was in turmoil and away in the north the Sharif of Baihan, last of the traditional leaders, had departed for Saudi Arabia.

Chapter X

War with Two Fronts

4 September-November 1967

There is no such thing as the NLF—we are one revolutionary body.
Abdullah al Asnag, Head of the FLOSY politician body
Taiz, April 1967

Showing openmindedness and tolerance FLOSY has always treated the NLF like a younger brother.
Abdul Qawee Mackawee, Secretary-General of FLOSY
to UN Mission in Cairo, September 1967

FLOSY are a gang of Zionists.
NLF leaflet—Shaikh Uthman
October 1967

The small stocky man in turban and sunglasses didn't look like a leader of revolution. Only when he began to speak did the intensity of his words, accompanied by dramatic gestures, give a hint at the fanaticism which for most of his forty-two years had made Qahtan al Shaabi a dedicated dissident. Journalists had been called to Zingibar forty-five miles along the beach from Aden and recently taken over by the NLF. Here the NLF leader had chosen to make his headquarters and for the first time address the press in South Arabia. Surrounded by three hundred well-armed tribesmen and a wildly enthusiastic crowd in which South Arabian Police were prominent, the NLF leader let it be known that he was willing to meet the High Commissioner provided that the British first publicly announced that the NLF was the true representative of the people. FLOSY would be allowed to live in peace in an NLF state—no more—and the United Nations' Mission had no right to interfere.

Qahtan al Shaabi's press conference took place two days before Sir Humphrey Trevelyan's broadcast offering to negotiate with the nationalists. When the offer came the NLF rejected it outright. They had not been accepted as the only party with whom the British were prepared to talk and also they were not yet strong enough to accept.

Although Qahtan al Shaabi appeared confident enough in Zingibar, privately he must have been worried and not a little perplexed. The former Director of Agriculture had come a long way since the days when he had been driven to fabricate 'news items' in his dingy Cairo office. The



36 Guerillas of the NLF come out into the open

previous two years had been spent in semi-detention in Egypt, far from the scene of action, and he had only been released in the aftermath of the June War. He can have had no idea of the extent of his movement. The universal acceptance of his leadership was based on the result of early Egyptian propaganda and his own efforts at public relations which had made him the best known of NLF figures. His enforced absence from the Yemen and South Arabia had blurred a reputation for quarrelling and alone of the NLF leaders had at no time come to an accommodation with FLOSY. From all over South Arabia, tribesmen, trades unionists, students and men with cause to fear headed for Zingibar to assure their 'leader' how they had long supported the NLF and helped it to victory. Al Shaabi had little means of telling which of his wellwishers were genuine and which were not. The members of the NLF High Command steadily expanded from the fifteen announced in Zingibar to an unwieldy forty-three by the end of October and nobody, not even the leader himself, seemed able to agree on the names. In the event this proved to be a decisive strength for the NLF as the better-organised FLOSY knew quite well who their supporters were and gave short shrift to any fairweather pretenders. The uncommitted, the isolated, the junior civil servants and the ordinary men in the street who wanted nothing more than to be left alone, soon caught on and flocked to swell the ranks of their rivals.

The Zingibar press conference was not the first to be given by the NLF. For days before Nagwa Mackawee (once graphically described as South Arabia's answer to Rosa Kleb), whose dislike for her uncle had led her to become a vociferous leader of NLF women in Aden, had gone to the

Crescent Hotel and invited pressmen to Dar Saad. Here they met 'Naqib' a young schoolteacher flanked by two 'commandos' carrying Russian submachine guns. The crowd outside the police station cheerfully chanted NLF slogans whilst 'Naqib' explained that he and his men had taken over the village from the Lahej authorities. A week later the press returned, this time to a FLOSY conference. 'Naqib' had been driven out and perhaps killed; of his headquarters one wall remained standing and the same crowd shouted for FLOSY with equal enthusiasm. The fighting was the first pitched battle to be fought between the two factions in Aden and was an indication of things to come. Over the next six weeks efforts were made by organisations as divergent as the South Arabian Army, the United Nations' Mission and the Arab League to bring the two Fronts together. All failed. Often when a successful solution appeared to have been arrived at in Cairo or elsewhere bursts of violent fighting would break out in South Arabia and destroy the efforts of the peacemakers.

Both sides were evenly matched. FLOSY were generally stronger in Aden although the oil refinery workers of Little Aden and the powerful dockers' union represented an impressive bloc of NLF support. Upcountry the west was almost entirely in the hands of the NLF although the tribesmen of Radfan and Haushabi and the Jebel Jihaf continued to support FLOSY. This gave FLOSY control of the main road from the Yemen which enabled it to continue to send reinforcements to its forces in Aden for some time to come. The important central area was completely under NLF control but in the east former Federal rulers held most of Wahidi, the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom, the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate and Baihan in the name of FLOSY. The NLF had two other advantages, not immediately apparent but nonetheless important. Their leaders had nearly all returned to the south while apart from the renegade Federalis those of FLOSY preferred to expend their energies in Cairo and Taiz. It is said that Abdullah al Asnag paid a brief visit to al Mansura but left before the fighting with promises to return with aid which were never to be fulfilled.

So the NLF were seen as a national party, something indigenous to South Arabia, and had survived despite Egyptian opposition. Alternatively, FLOSY were seen as an Egyptian and therefore foreign creation. The support of most South Arabians for President Nasser is qualified. They had been critical observers of Egyptian performance in the Yemen and interference in South Arabia. They were prepared to pay lip service to the great man only so long as he didn't come to South Arabia. Later, when a known anti-Egyptian commentator on Aden Radio, Abdul Rahman Haideri, was brought before an NLF tribunal and asked ,'Why did you speak out against our Egyptian brothers?' he replied with some courage, 'Because they have caused great harm to our country.' The president of the tribunal said, 'He is absolutely right' and instead of being taken out and shot as he expected, the man was reinstated in his position.

The Egyptians were amongst the first to realise the weakness of the FLOSY position and made strenuous efforts to persuade the two factions to

co-operate. The release of Qahtan al Shaabi was not the least of these. They were handicapped by their consistent efforts in the past to impose FLOSY on everybody else and because at one time or another they had supported every party in opposition to the British. For years the white-robed Muhammad Ali al Jifri of the South Arabian League had been lionised by the Arab League and as Egypt wished to gain maximum Arab support for her South Arabian Policy, Muhammad Ali al Jifri had perforce to be included in the peace talks.

The Arab League stumbling upon something everybody else had been trying to bring about for years, called a conference of all contending parties in South Arabia to bring about a form of coalition government to receive independence. Much to his surprise even Bayumi found himself invited. The conference, held in Cairo, never really began. Bayumi was the first casualty. In typical fashion he flung away whatever chances he had by insulting his Egyptian hosts. Sitting drinking coffee with Colonel Izzat Sulaiman who was organising the meeting for the Egyptians, and a host of journalists in Cairo's Hilton Hotel, Bayumi heard the rumble of Israeli mortar fire from across the canal, something which had been tacitly ignored by everybody else.

'Well,' he said, jovially addressing himself to the company at large, 'bang, bang, bang—just like home. Reminds me of Mansura and Shaikh Uthman but of course we have Egyptian mortars there and being of our Arab brethren so to speak, they rarely hit the target. Still, how the world turns, who would have thought of it in Cairo of all places.'

The Egyptians were furious and that was the end of Bayumi. That was also the end of the conference as the organisers soon realised that the only parties who counted were those with men and guns in South Arabia.

In the early days of September, FLOSY leaders in Cairo were sanguine of coming to an agreement which would give them the bulk of control in 'revolutionary government'. They believed that they held a trump card in the persons of Faisal al Shaabi and Muhammad al Bishi, captured in the fight at Musaiymir a month previously.

Several days were spent negotiating an agreement with these two but it was announced only to be instantly repudiated by the NLF in South Arabia and through their spokesmen in Beirut. As Mackawee rather querulously complained to the United Nations' Mission, he had discovered that those who claimed to speak on the behalf of the NLF Supreme Council had no authority to commit that body. The British could have told him some stories about that.

For their part the NLF cleverly announced that it was willing to meet FLOSY on any part of 'liberated' South Arabian soil, knowing that territory still held by the pseudo-FLOSY rulers could hardly be termed 'liberated' in the best revolutionary sense of the word and that anywhere else they would be able to bring intolerable pressure on any FLOSY delegates. FLOSY declined and suggested a list of Arab capitals as possible meeting places. In the middle, the South Arabian Army issued an ultimatum to both sides and

when this expired without result on the 20 September extended it until the end of the month. Suddenly and to the surprise of many, including sections of the NLF, Qahtan al Shaabi announced that he would take a peace delegation to talk with FLOSY and on 4 October he led a four-man delegation plus two advisers to Cairo.

Whilst they were away, engaged in their desultory negotiations, matters were taken out of their hands by the course of events back in South Arabia.

In the final analysis, victory for either party rested on the attitude of the South Arabian Army. It was divided on what were essentially tribal lines. Most of the Aulaqis, although by no means all, supported FLOSY, the rest the NLF. The FLOSY chances of success rested therefore on the extent to which the Aulaqi officer corps could maintain their positions in the face of rising opposition. Because of their divisions, the army, together with the South Arabian Police, tried to keep up a formal position of neutrality and use their influence to bring the two sides together. At the same time, Colonel Basir Buraiq, the Commander-designate, was sending his followers to fight alongside PORF in the streets of Shaikh Uthman, and non-Aulaqi commanders upcountry were actively assisting the NLF. For the sake of appearances a committee of seven colonels had been formed which included Abdul Hadi Shihab, the NLF head of the Aden Police and Abdulla Salih, his opposite number in the states. Colonel Abdulla, known as 'number seven', was an Aulaqi—a minor member of the ruling family who considered that his cousins had not given him his dues in the past and was consequently a fanatical member of the NLF. The majority of the colonels sympathised with the NLF but for a while the power remained with their rivals. Following the taking of Dar Saad the army took its first steps to try and keep the peace in Aden. Appeals were made over the radio calling upon the factional forces to withdraw from the areas around the borders of Aden Colony, which would become a military area. On the next day, 7 September, they mounted 'Operation Victory' and entered Dar Saad just in time to prevent three thousand pro-NLF tribesmen who were gathering to counter-attack the occupying FLOSY 'commandos' from carrying out their intent; but they were unable to prevent further violence in Aden itself.

Tempers between the factions were running high and when in Shaikh Uthman PORF erected a lookout post in what was held to be NLF territory it was enough to start widespread fighting. A bitter and prolonged gun battle continued throughout most of 10 September as the two sides struggled for supremacy. Over forty people, mostly non-combatants, were killed and kidnapping was carried out by both sides on a major scale. Although some units of PORF deserted to the NLF early on, FLOSY were again victorious, driving their opponents from all but a corner of the town.

Throughout this time Shaikh Uthman was under the nominal control of the British. The Parachute Regiment which normally patrolled the area had strict orders to keep out of the fighting and only returned when it was over to help clear up the mess. This brought into focus the usefulness of British

troops who were daily risking their lives to no purpose and whose continued presence may have been preventing the South Arabian Army from intervening to save further bloodshed.

Their phased withdrawal to redoubts guarding the Government House area in Steamer Point and the vital Khormaksar airfield was speeded up and the decision made to hand over the control in the various townships to the South Arabian Army.

Little Aden was selected to be the scene of the first transfer of internal security for a part of Aden. The great base which cost an estimated £17 million had only recently been completed. The modern workshops of Fallaise camp, the long lines of soldiers' accommodation, the swimming pools and the army church. Perhaps this last was constructed with an eye to the future as it was shaped like a mosque and very shortly the crescent was to replace the cross on its whitened dome. All was overshadowed by the bulk of the oil refinery, the reason for Little Aden's very existence and whose British staff would remain behind after the troops had gone.

The handing-over ceremony was short and took place around the Queen's Own Hussars' flag pole. The Hussars' flag was lowered and the South Arabian Army flag raised as the band played marches. The South Arabian Army's ceremonial camel troop, adorned in green and yellow, dipped their pennants as the British troops drove out, a regimental dog howling in the back of a truck.

Hardly had the dust settled behind the retreating British vehicles than the NLF were on the streets. Landrovers and cars full of cheering youths, some openly carrying weapons, careered around the streets. NLF flags appeared everywhere and looting over the vacated British camps began almost immediately. The South Arabian Army Commander was Colonel Ali Abdullah Maiseri who had been chosen for the task on account of his known NLF sympathies. Within two days he had contacted the local NLF command and had brought conditions back to normal. From then on until the British finally left there was no quieter and more secure place in the whole of the Colony than Little Aden.

One Union Jack still flies in Little Aden where a white cross stands as a landmark over the military cemetery of Silent Valley. One hundred and twenty eight men and women lie here, guarded by the two volcanic peaks of Aden's hills which seem to pierce the sky. By strange coincidence there is one grave for every year of British blood, sweat and tears in South Arabia.

There were no bands playing when the troops pulled out of Shaikh Uthman and al Mansura, last held for the British by the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Lancashire Fusiliers. Of all districts of Aden Shaikh Uthman was the most difficult to control. From a central core of stone buildings the shanty town spews out into the desert in all directions. The accessibility and active participation by Aden Police and South Arabian Army units made gunrunning impossible to prevent. The nearby Lahej border and village of Dar Saad into which the troops could not pursue without authority, provided the easiest of escape routes. The wood and cardboard

huts housed an ever-shifting population of Yemeni immigrants, Somalis, tribesmen down from the hills to seek work and criminals fleeing from justice. To keep a check on them would have required a division. A patrol at night through the streets was an eerie experience, aptly described as a walk down a street with a thousand watching eyes.* The Paratroop headquarters, named Fort Walsh after their commander, backed onto Shaikh Uthman Zoo. Never amongst the most magnificent of spectacles which Aden had to offer, the coming of war, lack of visitors to the gardens and regular feeding reduced the few animals to a pitiful condition so that the Paras added their care to their many other duties. Once when a shell-shocked python escaped from captivity, the whole town, used to daily sounds of battle, was almost paralysed with terror until the thing disappeared.

The Lancashire Fusiliers in al Mansura had an equally thankless task. It consisted mainly of escorting convoys to the al Mansura jail which they had also made their headquarters. Scarce a convoy got through without being sniped at. Each column of Ferret scout cars and personnel carriers had to pass around the roundabout on which stood the al Mansura picket. Looking out across a wide stretch of open ground broken by a few half-built houses whose construction had long since been given up, the picket post, surrounded by a high wire fence to ward off bazooka shells, claimed with justification to be the most shot-at place in Aden. A notice which read, 'Please do not fire rockets at this structure which is unsafe', seemed to have little effect.

Towards the end the Lancastrians were beginning to have suspicions, never proved, that they were being used for target practice by the South Arabian Police. Often in the late afternoon two or three truckloads of police in civilian dress would pass through the Lancashires' check point and disappear into the town. A few minutes later the trucks would drive out empty and sniping would commence at the British positions. Then, just before darkness fell, the trucks would return, collect their load of police and head back for barracks. About this time the firing would cease.

During the night of 23 September the British troops withdrew from both townships, handing over their positions to the South Arabian Army. Most of the detainees had been released over the previous weeks but some forty-five were shifted to the Royal Air Force guardhouse in Steamer Point before the prison was abandoned.

* On the day of withdrawal a band of Paratroopers were climbing onto a truck near the municipal market place. A tribesman slipped out of the stone doorway and flung a grenade at them. The author, some distance away, flung himself to the ground, but a private of the Paratroopers knelt and shot the fleeing man dead– this while the grenade was still in the air and apparently coming straight at him. The soldier rolled out of the way and the grenade exploded harmlessly.

Another man to have a miraculous escape was Captain Gwain Dawkins of the Royal Army Ordinance Corps. Leading a patrol one night through the darkened streets he was struck in the face by a grenade flung from a rooftop. The grenade bounced away and the Captain escaped with a bruised jaw.



37 British troops leave Aden. The last picket: men of the Royal Marines board a Wessex helicopter on the Khormaksar salt flats.

The following day there was dancing in the streets to celebrate the British withdrawal, the blind Shaikh Muhammad al Baihani, the most prominent religious figure, asked the mosques to hold special sessions to recite passages from the *Qur'an* in thanksgiving. For the first time in two years shops, restaurants and coffee houses did not close down their shutters at dusk. Some proprietors even went so far as to give their customers free coffee to mark the occasion.

The Paratroopers now took up positions around the airfield and the Lancashires left for home. The British still controlled a large part of the Colony. The Marines held Maalla and the Prince of Wales' Own patrolled the dusty streets of Steamer Point.

In Crater the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders maintained a brooding peace. Ever since their re-occupation of the town following the June 'siege' the Scots had been a regiment apart. They were the only regiment ever to approach the problem of maintaining internal security in Aden as occupying troops in a hostile country and to a large extent it paid off. The Scots soldiers shared the talent in common with many another British regiment, of being tough yet at the same time getting on with the local population at street level. In Crater the Argylls were hard, perhaps they had to be. Houses were searched with scarce regard for the occupants or their property, men waiting to be searched were forced to stand for hours in the sun, machine guns had a fixed line on the door of every mosque, a favourite

sanctuary for grenadiers, and would open up after an incident.

The Argylls claimed an impressive 'bag' of 'terrorists' although in some quarters this was thought to be a little too good. The citizens of Crater were not long in complaining of the Scots' severity. In July two hundred had signed a petition alleging brutality by the soldiers which they presented to the High Commission. They received scant sympathy from John Wilton, the Assistant High Commissioner. In a passionately worded letter to Ali Muhammad Maqtari, one of the eleven leading Adenis who had visited him in his office, Wilton wrote 'It is not the British who have paralysed and destroyed the administrative, commercial and industrial life of Aden. It is not the British who have burned and wrecked property worth thousands of pounds and placed bombs in the houses of innocent people and reduced Aden's Port, the source of most of its wealth, to such a condition that the shipping lines of the world are anxiously looking for an alternative. How many people were killed and kidnapped when the British withdrew from Crater? The answer is that probably nobody knows.' Mr Wilton said that he was not raising these points in any spirit of bitterness or reproach. 'I say these things merely to point out that many of the evils which Aden is suffering from will not end with our departure.' Britain would do everything she could until independence to bring Aden to a peaceful and happy future. It was up to the respectable citizens of Aden to play their part in achieving this aim.

The Argylls were not unopposed in Crater. A careless or off-guarded moment usually resulted in an attack. Two Scotsmen were killed by a grenade and a lookout was shot through the head by an armed policeman from the parapet of the Crater police station. A clutch of well-aimed mortar bombs fell on the roof of the heavily guarded Chartered Bank building which they used for their headquarters, killing a corporal and injuring others. The mortar was used again and despite the most intensive searching the Argylls never discovered the identity of their assailants. Their intelligence officer, Major Nigel Crowe, was on the point of guessing when they eventually pulled out. He and his men must have seen the red-painted fire engines of the Aden Police dozens of times hurrying to and from scenes of incidents as they made way for them at the road blocks; a brief inspection would have revealed the mortar pipes in the holes where the hoses should have been.

Although they have been strongly criticised for their methods the fact remains that Crater under the Argylls never blew up as Shaikh Uthman, al Mansura and, to a lesser extent, Steamer Point did. When one considers that the town, packed with weapons, had been in a state of open rebellion for a fortnight immediately previous to the Argyll entry then the subsequent bloodshed was remarkably light and much less than the most optimistic had predicted at the time.

The Arabs were not the only ones with whom the Scots were unpopular. Contrary to the hallowed traditions of the services the regiment had gone in for some aggressive publicity. It seemed as if the senior officers were

prepared to hold forth at any time on any subject, preferably in front of the television cameras, an officer was delegated to look after the regiment's publicity requirements and the regimental photographer was never far away whenever the colonel, Colin Mitchell, went abroad. These activities considerably irked Middle East Command and other units equally worthy, yet back at home in the United Kingdom to the public, sickened by the daily news of squalid death and British retreat, the Scots exploits came as a welcome relief, a ray of sunshine on a uniformly dull day.*

Whilst the British were withdrawing, the politicians arguing and the South Arabian forces making up their minds, the NLF were winning spectacular victories in the east. After the fall of the central area there had come a pause and it was thought that Shaikhdoms east of the Aulaqi line had a good chance of survival. The South Arabian Army commanders in Baihan and Ataq, second town of the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom, had other ideas. Both men, non-Aulaqis and strong supporters of the NLF, did all in their power to overthrow the remaining sultans.

Their first success came in the Lower Aulaqi Sultanate. The local South Arabian Police had got together with the football team to force the resignation of the two naibs,† who were *de facto* rulers of the state. The young Sultan Nasir bin Aidrus, who had spent much of his time in al Ittihad and was not unpopular, they left alone and he continued to live in his house. Shortly after the coup a loyal officer of the police left for Aden and told the British authorities that unless they acted quickly there was a possibility of bloodshed. The Ba Kazam, Lower Aulaqi's warlike mercenary tribe, were reported to be on the march. The reason was unknown, but whatever it was the likelihood of it ending with the sack of Ahwar, the state capital, was a distinct possibility. Apparently the presence of the two naibs was embarrassing the revolutionaries who had no desire to kill them but may have been forced to do so in order to placate the Ba Kazam if they appeared. The decision was made to try and lift the naibs off to a minesweeper and HMS *Yarton* left Aden for the two hundred mile trip up the coast with Bill Heber-Percy, lately the Senior Adviser for the Eastern Area, to carry out the necessary negotiations. Heber-Percy was landed on the coast and spent a gloomy hour waiting whilst a man was sent to the town with news of his arrival and mission.

Whilst sitting on the beach he met a group of fishermen with whom a few weeks previously he had arranged to set up a local co-operative society. They were friendly and he asked how the society was getting on. The fishermen grinned shyly and pointed to a large NLF flag flying

*Whilst most Britons approved Colonel Mitchell's actions, General Tower was not his only critic. Fred Halliwell, the Marxist commentator wrote: '"Mad Mitch" as he became known was a surreal relic of Britain's colonial past: a crazed fusion of a Celtic madman, belligerent imperialist and cantankerous military commander.'

†Ali Aidrus, Bubaker bin Ahmad.

ostentatiously from a nearby police point. 'The revolution has come,' they said, 'we no longer have need of societies as we now have the Sultan's money to spend.'

A few minutes later an emissary from the NLF appeared and another meeting was arranged further down the coast. The NLF, led by the former assistant State Treasurer, appeared on time in two Landrovers together with the two naibs. The Sultan, believing himself safe, had declined an offer to leave. Saying 'This was my father's home and his father's before him, I see no reason why I should leave.' The local NLF saw no reason either and he stayed. They may have been happy about the Sultan but were obviously perturbed at letting the naibs go scot-free. To cover themselves they endeavoured to persuade Heber-Percy to sign a paper to the effect that Britain was responsible for all the money 'which the Naibs had stolen from the people over the past twenty years.' Heber-Percy demurred and tactfully pointed out that unless the party were soon back on board the minesweeper there was a likelihood of it opening up with its large guns on Ahwar's small fort. This was thought reasonable enough and everybody had a good laugh when the two naibs tripped over each other as they clambered into the dinghy which was to carry them to the minesweeper and safety.

A few days later the Ba Kazam, organised by fellow tribesmen in the South Arabian Army who had been sent down from Ataq for the purpose, arrived on the outskirts of Ahwar. They were met by a delegation from the town who thanked them for coming but assured them that the revolution had already triumphed. A few of the leaders then went into Ahwar and paid their respects to the Sultan and, much to the surprise and relief of the townsfolk, left. The news of these goings-on shortly reached the ears of Qahtan al Shaabi in Zingibar. A cadre of 'indoctrinated' NLF were despatched to take charge. The Sultan was whisked off to captivity, the local committee mostly replaced and the rest reprimanded for not acting in the true spirit of the revolution.

Although a breach had been made in the Aulaqi wall, the real fighting was yet to come and the NLF were not able to repeat this easy and bloodless victory elsewhere. In the neighbouring State of Wahidi the situation was confused. Towards the end of August the Hakim Ali bin Muhammad, son of the man murdered in the Dakota aircrash the year before, was in Beirut when news came through that some of his tribes had declared for the NLF. The Hakim hurried for home but when he arrived in Ataq he found that the Aulaqis deeply suspicious of the garrison, were manning the hills and preventing movement to the south. As the Hakim had to pass through their territory to reach his capital at Maifah he was stuck and, not being so politically astute or well informed as his neighbours, appealed to the army for help. After a lot of prodding from Aden the army reluctantly agreed to place a Sioux helicopter at his disposal.

Early on the morning of 3 September the Hakim began his fifty-mile journey accompanied only by Major Peter Gooch, a Briton still serving with the South Arabian Army, and the pilot, a sergeant in the Army Air Corps.

The South Arabian Police in Maifah had been alerted of the Hakim's imminent arrival and asked to make the necessary preparations. However, the Commander, Mahdi Muhsin, correctly forecast trouble and decided that it would be more diplomatic if he took his men out on patrol. Thus when the helicopter circled the town it was unable to land as usual on the football field because of a mass of people moving across it with nobody to control them. Consequently the pilot was forced to put his aircraft down in a nearby wadi bed. What happened next is uncertain. According to eye witnesses the tribesmen gathered on each side of the wadi which served as a border between those who still supported the Hakim and those who did not. A band of schoolboys stood on the edge of the crowd clutching an NLF banner, a few slogans were shouted by both sides but otherwise there was little sign of imminent violence as the Hakim, accompanied by Gooch, moved towards a small committee which had moved into the wadi bed to greet them. There was a brief exchange, Gooch was seen to shake the Hakim's hand and walk back towards the helicopter. At this juncture a single tribesman ran down from the other bank waving a sub-machine gun. Gooch quickly climbed aboard and the helicopter began to lift off. Then the Major appeared to reach down beside his seat as if for a weapon or grenade and as he did so the tribesman fired a burst into the cabin. The Sioux continued to lift. Other bursts followed and the cabin was smashed. About forty feet up the stricken Sioux staggered in the air before crashing to the ground and bursting into flames, both occupants perishing.

The firing then became general. Utterly dismayed by the turn of events, supporters of the Hakim fled taking him with them. He first moved to his house in Azzan and then, together with Shaikh Ali Musaid Bubakri, held out against his enemies for several weeks before being forced to retire to Saudi Arabia due to the general collapse around him.

The NLF supporters were equally dismayed by the disaster for the very good reason that they were fearful of British air retaliation. A bulldozer was quickly brought into action to bury the remains of the Sioux. This was successful in hiding it from the aircraft which came out to search for the missing helicopter and it was several days before the authorities in Aden learnt what had happened.

Even as the Hakim of Wahidi climbed aboard the helicopter on the start of his ill-fated journey, a far more significant event was taking place further north. The Sharif Hussain bin Ahmad al Habili, CMG, founder member and elder statesman of the Federation, terror of the revolution and the most powerful personality in all South Arabia, was departing for Saudi Arabia together with his son Salih, the Ruler,* and seventy Baihani leaders. Why

*By a quirk of tribal tradition the Sharif Hussain was not the ruler in his own state. He was the youngest of his father Ahmad and when the old man lay dying he realised that of all his sons, Hussain was the most fitted to rule. To nominate him directly as successor would have caused bloodshed so he nominated his eldest grandson, Salih, then about a year old, so that the child's father, Hussain, automatically became Regent during his minority.

he left is not least of the riddles of South Arabia but in doing so he made the greatest mistake of his life. There is no doubt that the party intended to return. Valuable chattels were left behind and the daughters whom the Sharif adored above all living things remained at the family seat of Naqub, some twenty miles north of Baihan. It seems probable that having observed the chaos around him the Sharif hoped to come to some arrangement with King Faisal whereby Baihan became an autonomous province within the Saudi Arabian Kingdom. He took the tribal leaders with him as a token of his support and also to ensure that they got up to no mischief in his absence. If this was so, then he grossly underestimated the situation. King Faisal, relieved that the Egyptians were finally withdrawing from the Yemen, was concentrating his efforts on seeming disengagement and was in no position to aid Baihan, hundreds of miles away across some of the worst desert in the world.

As the Sharif drove away on his desert journey he may have given thought to the hundred or so dissidents that lurked in the mountains but if so it was only a passing thought. They were a fairly wretched lot and he had never experienced much trouble keeping them at bay. He may have more deeply considered the problem posed by the South Arabian battalion sitting in Baihan. He must have known that he was taking a gamble but then his nephew, Colonel Sharif Haidar, was high in the command, he had personal assurance of loyalty from the local commander as well as many senior officers whom his younger son, Qaid, had assiduously cultivated over the past two years and he knew his not inconsiderable prestige ensured an awe amounting to fear of the consequence should anyone make so bold as to kick over the traces. After all, had not his mere presence been enough to quieten the troops on the day of the mutiny?*

To ensure against trouble the Sharif left his nephew Faisal behind with adequate guards and supplies to hold out if attacked. This was the worst mistake of all.

As soon as the Sharif had left the army officers got in contact with the dissidents, who were mostly drawn from the Masa'bin, but for a time nobody could bring themselves to take action. Then Colonel Haidar decided to pay a visit to his home state.

Two days after the Colonel's arrival the Sharif Faisal invited the army officers to the palace for lunch following the Friday prayers. He wasn't to know that they had also planned a party at the same time and the same place. As they were sitting down to eat a small demonstration, mostly composed of soldiers, formed up outside the palace shouting pro-NLF slogans. Faisal went out and spoke to them and they dispersed. When he returned he asked the officers to take steps to arrest the ringleaders. Somehow the result of this was a larger demonstration which made its way to the jail and, with the help of South Arabian Police, released the

* See Chapter VIII.

prisoners. Colonel Haidar then left for the camp and spent the next hour and a half arguing furiously with the local commander, Lt Colonel Nagi Abdul Qawi Mahlai and his officers before he succeeded in persuading them to call off their men. Haidar then returned to the town and was astonished to find that Faisal together with his guards and loyal members of the South Arabian Police had decamped to Naqub. Haidar followed in their wake but was unable to persuade them to return. There was nothing more to be done and within a few hours the NLF flag was flying over Baihan. The army then produced the dissidents, who proclaimed a 'People's Government' and took up uneasy residence in the palace.

The Sharif's younger son Qaid, who had been to Geneva for talks with the United Nations' Mission had returned to Aden the same day and Haidar flew from Baihan to see him. Both men tried to return to Baihan the next day but failed due to unserviceability of the aircraft. Haidar alone at length succeeded and when he arrived on Baihan airstrip he found himself surrounded by yelling soldiers shouting, 'We want Qaid', whom they believed to be on the same aircraft having received a signal to this effect from their headquarters in Aden. Qaid not forthcoming, the soldiers settled for his cousin Haidar and for some minutes it seemed as if the Colonel was in danger of being lynched. Eventually he was rescued by his fellow officers and lodged in the officers' mess. The next day, 12 September, he was flown back to Aden.

Hussain Uthman Ushal solved the problem of Naqub. Even as Haidar was on his way back to Aden, he sent a messenger to the Sharif Faisal and arranged a meeting under flag of truce. He brusquely told the Baihanis that the British had abandoned them and that unless they moved out of Naqub into Saudi Arabia they were to be bombed. When the Sharif Faisal refused to believe the story, the Colonel pointed dramatically to his watch. 'In ten minutes', he said, 'the RAF will be here.' Sure enough, exactly on time, RAF jets flew low overhead. The Ashraf, convinced, packed their belongings and in vehicles lent them by the army they made their way into exile. The RAF, oblivious of the role they had played, flew back to Aden. They had been asked by the South Arabian Army to fly a routine patrol of the Naqub area because of possible frontier trouble. Whether any of the British officers at Seedaseer Lines guessed the real purpose of the operation remains a mystery but it seems that at least one may have done and played a large role in conceiving it into the bargain.

So Baihan, stronghold of the sultans, fell without a shot being fired. The Colonel's ruse had succeeded. For the NLF it was a remarkable victory, for the rulers still in the field and by inference, FLOSY, a crippling blow.

On hearing the news the Sharif hurried back to the borders of his state convinced he could win back what his family had so easily surrendered. On arrival at the Royalist town of Harib he received the message that dashed his hopes. Sir Humphrey Trevelyan warned the Sharif and his Saudi allies that British policy was to support the South Arabian Army and that in accordance with previous practice the Royal Air Force would

support them against any attack across the frontier.

The Sharif of Baihan was the oldest and staunchest of British allies in South Arabia. He was still under British protection and could protest that the South Arabian Army still nominally under the command of a British officer and paid and armed by the British had overthrown his government and taken his property. The rebels were no friends to the British and constituted no political entity as such. Yet in the interests of a peaceful British withdrawal Sir Humphrey felt he made the right decision.

The Sharif fully realised that it is far more difficult to get back into power than to stay in it. Wisely he decided that the time was not ripe for a comeback and withdrew, sending his shaikhs home to make their peace and biding his time for the day when British air power could not be employed to oppose his plans.

The news of the Sharif's downfall spread like wildfire, causing dismay or elation, depending upon the recipient's politics. For one man above all others it was especially welcome and he hastened to send word to Baihan of his impending arrival. This news was greeted with mixed feelings: the army had known of and feared their visitor for years and the 'NLF Government', until a few days previously, had been his pensioners.

Out of the west came a cloud of dust and three trucks filled with Yemeni tribesmen lurched to a halt outside the palace. The tribesmen amused themselves by firing shots of welcome in the air whilst their leader stalked inside.

The man who swaggered into the Sharif's hall was none other than the Awadi Shaikh, known throughout the Yemen as 'the contractor' for his habit of telling the Republican government he would take such and such a town or subdue such and such a tribe for so much hard cash. His present mission was the recapture of Harib, a small border town held by the Royalists more easily approached from the Baihan side of the border.

It must have given the Shaikh considerable pleasure to be in Baihan as he was a bitter personal enemy of the Sharif and had long intrigued against him. In addition he bore a special grudge against the Baihanis for giving refuge to the Ahl Muqbil, the only section of the Awadhi's tribe to side with the Royalists in the Yemeni war. Indeed, much of the Awadhi's grisly reputation was founded on the manner in which he had dealt with those dissidents.

Some eighteen months before the Awadhi had enticed the leaders of the Ahl Muqbil to a peace conference in a small stone fort. After two days of fruitless discussion the Awadhi unexpectedly gave in to their conditions and a celebration lunch was arranged to seal the bargain. In fact the Awadhi had only been stalling until the arrival of an ancient Soviet armoured car borrowed from the Republican garrison of Baidha to impose a final settlement of his own.

The Ahl Muqbil suspected nothing and twenty-six turned up for lunch, discarding their weapons on entering in accordance with custom. Once they were all inside the hosts seized the rifles and withdrew. The building

was surrounded by armed men and the armoured car, emerging from its hiding place, began to shell the building. Very soon the luckless tribesmen realised that to survive they would have to break through their enemies and in a body they rushed out. Only six managed to get away and seek refuge in Baihan, the rest were mown down by the waiting riflemen.

The shooting finished, the Awadhi, accompanied by his brother Muhammad, strolled over to inspect the bodies.

The Shaikh of Ahl Muqbil had received a burst full in the chest but in doing so had shielded his fourteen-year-old son who lay shamming death at his father's side. As the two Awadhi brothers approached the boy leapt up and pulling out a revolver shot Muhammad between the eyes. The boy was quickly slaughtered and the outraged Awadhi offered to pay the Sharif to surrender the refugees, a request which the Sharif flatly refused.

It was this man then who, sitting in the Sharif's own chair in the palace's council chamber, set about persuading the South Arabian Army officers and the local NLF that it was in their interest that they help him succeed in his mission to oust the Royalists from Harib. He pointed out, reasonably enough, that the Sharif with his tremendous influence amongst the Royalist tribes might use the town as a base for the recapture of Baihan. The soldiers and the local NLF needed little convincing. They lived in daily dread of the Sharif's return and readily agreed with the Yemeni's suggestion.

The Awadhi, well pleased with his success, drove off in a borrowed army Landrover to view his objective and gather his forces, while the army sent alarmist messages down to Aden claiming they were about to be attacked by 18,000 Royalist tribesmen.

Three days later the Awadhi returned at the head of a five hundred-strong tribal army which, passing through Baihan territory, debouched into the wadi facing Harib. The town was held by about two hundred Royalist irregulars who were expecting the assault and were well prepared. As soon as the attackers crossed the border they came under accurate mortar attack and suffered casualties.

In the event this proved to be the Royalists' undoing. Some of the bombs fell near or within South Arabian borders and the army, using the excuse that they were under attack, opened up on the town with their 25 pounder field guns. As a result of their telegrams forecasting imminent attack by overwhelming Royalist forces they had received a plane-load of shells the day before and so were able to keep up the bombardment for several hours, reducing the town to rubble. By noon the last defenders had been driven out and Harib, or what was left of it, was in Republican hands for the first time in thirty months. For the time being South Arabia's northern borders had been made safe for the revolution and the South Arabian Army could be said to have gained its first battle honour.

The Yemeni Royalists protested vigorously about the incident through their legations in Jiddah and London. King Faisal also let it be known that he was displeased and it came as no surprise a while later when important Saudi defence contracts thought at one time to be earmarked for the British

went elsewhere. The King had other reasons for being annoyed with his British friends: by a neat piece of diplomacy over three thousand needy South Arabian refugees, mostly members of the ruling class, had been flown into Jiddah and dumped on his doorstep. Many of them were almost penniless and others who were not would soon be so, depending for their existence on Saudi charity and what they could get out of the British Embassy, which wasn't much.

At times the three states which made up the Eastern Aden Protectorate seemed far away from the strife which was ruining their western neighbours. The people lived a sheltered existence far from Aden and separated from the Yemen by vast stretches of desert and mountain. That is not to say that trouble and discontent were absent. The young men and intellectuals of the Hadhramaut had provided many of the 'nationalist' leaders in Aden itself although on home ground, naturally quarrelsome and influenced by family ties, they found difficulty in finding a common cause or even a common target. So in time much of the leadership of incipient nationalist movement in Mukalla and Seyun fell into the hands of comparative newcomers. Young men, more Indonesian, Indian or African than Arab, sons of immigrant Hadhramis forced to return to their own barren shores by the xenophobia of other peoples.

Here economic discontent rapidly found its outlet in political extremism. This was a comparatively late development and perhaps because of this disturbances were minimal when compared to the rest of South Arabia. There had been a few explosions in Mukalla and the commander of the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion had been murdered by one of his men, but otherwise the only major upheaval had occurred when the nationalists joined the administration in liquidating the South Arabian League.*

Qaiti was far and away the richest and most populous of the three states and politically the most advanced. What was decided in Mukalla usually went for Seyun and to a lesser extent Ghaida as well. Perhaps if the Qaiti sultans had been stronger then they would have maintained their own and their colleagues' positions. The spastic Sultan Awadh had only recently died after years of ineffectual rule during which power had passed into the hands of his competent but occasionally corrupt and unscrupulous civil service which became the chief target of the nationalists and the mob. At his succession the young Sultan Ghalib was welcomed by almost every class. The majority of the people confidently expected his first act would be to purge the administration, but the Sultan was too young and the advisers too clever. He never ever got his hands on his own treasury. The people soon grew tired of waiting, nothing ever seemed to change in Mukalla.

Worried by the general trend of events in the west the three Hadhrami sultans met on 10 August to try and work out a common policy. Their

* See Chapter VI.

principal concern was the future and control of the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion. This British-trained force was the South Arabian Army's counterpart in the East and British prevarication as to whether it was to be disbanded or subsidised after independence had greatly increased the atmosphere of uncertainty. The sultans came to a working arrangement on the problem and decided to continue their discussions during a trip to Geneva where they had accepted an invitation to meet the United Nations' Mission.

Far from being alarmed by the increasing reports of sultanic disaster in the west the three sultans made a leisurely progress back to the Hadhramaut, enjoying the airs of Beirut and Cairo before taking a ship to Mukalla. They eventually completed their cruise on 17 September when the Saudi Arabian Steamship came to a rest in Mukalla roads. A surprise was awaiting them. The customary delegation put out from the shore and climbed aboard, but instead of the usual welcome the delegation brusquely told Sultan Ghalib that 'the people now ruled in Mukalla' and persuaded him to sign an instrument of abdication. The ruler of Kathiri was offered safe conduct to his state, this the old gentleman wisely declined and the delegation left the boat as abruptly as they had arrived, their business completed in less than an hour. The boat was persuaded to turn around and the three sultans sailed off to Saudi Arabia and exile.

When Sultan Ghalib had departed Mukalla for Geneva he left behind a committee to carry on the work of government. Like many committees of this kind it was composed of the ancient, the unscrupulous and the wary and was quite incapable of reaching a decision on anything vital. In this case, the trace of only one meeting, the inaugural, can be found. The British in the Residency had packed up and left a month previously and the Wazir al Attas had thoughtfully decided the time had come to resign and so had left the country for a comfortable retirement in Bahrain. The nationalists, seeing their chance and encouraged by NLF successes elsewhere, contacted their supporters in the Legion and seized the armoury. Then almost negligently they went around Mukalla arresting all of the administration and their political opponents who were taken completely by surprise. In no place were the insurgents opposed. As elsewhere it was the honest who suffered most, the sly and corrupt had already come to terms. Among the arrested was 'Major General' bin Sumaida, a staunch old soldier whose involvement in politics was confined to conversation, and Badr al Qasadi, the elderly Governor of Mukalla. Later, when the revolution had turned sour, these two old men were forced to parade before the mob and al Badr to shave off his moustaches.

After the taking of Mukalla, with the help of the Legion, NLF Committees were set up in the town of the Wadi Hadhramaut. On the 2 October, the local football team announced that it had taken over Kathiri in the name of the NLF. The tribesmen of Mahra soon followed suit although what happened on the distant island of Socotra remains a mystery.

Nationalist control of the Hadhramaut was principally confined to the urban areas, the tribes never declared themselves and watched upon events. Some, rather previously as it turned out, thought that the time had come for a return to the old ways and gathered to loot the northern towns before being effectively dispersed by an RAF firepower demonstration. This incident was taken up by the three sultans, then in Jiddah, who cabled the United Nations' Mission complaining of 'unwarranted action by the British Royal Air Force against loyal tribes which have so far refrained from recognising the British-backed minority group of terrorists',* pathetically ending their message with a plea that any reply should be sent care of the Jiddah Palace Hotel, Jiddah.

Control of the Hadhramaut by forces acting in their name considerably strengthened the NLF and it was this which may have finally led to Qahtan al Shaabi's decision to talk with FLOSY in Cairo instead of insisting on home ground. He considered that he had more than adequate proof that the NLF was in control of most of South Arabia and had no difficulty in maintaining the front that he was the mastermind controlling a vast organisation which stretched from one end of the country to the other. This, he was convinced, should be enough to bring FLOSY to terms.

The military position of the NLF was also considerably strengthened by possession of the Hadhramaut. It meant that the pseudo-FLOSY forces of the rulers holding out in Wahidi and the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate could now be assailed from two sides.

Throughout the months of September and October Shaikh Muhammad bin Muhsin, the grim old ruler of the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom, had been consolidating his position. From the family seat of Said he had watched the disintegration of the rest of the Federation and took steps to ensure that no matter what, he, the chief of the Aulaqis, would remain when all others had passed away. Due to the predominance of officers coming from his state he was better informed on the South Arabian Army than most of his shaikhly colleagues. He suffered from no doubts as to the true meaning of their 'protection' and politely refused permission for a convoy of supplies to pass through his territory to the hard-pressed South Arabian Police in Wahidi to the south. As the days passed the refusals became more brusque and when the army garrison at Ataq in the north of the state contrived to detach the Ahl Khalifa from their allegiance, an unspoken state of war existed between them.

From all over Aulaqi country tribes were summoned to Said and despatched to defend its borders. Tribesmen stood to the passes in the north and south through which an enemy must come. Contact was established with Shaikh Ali Musaid, still fighting in Wahidi and even the Ahl Bubakhr bin Farid, rebels in the Yemen for a generation past, came home and mostly declared their intention to give up their quarrel for the

* Report UN Mission, Annex III, page 181.

operation and defend the homeland. Of all the Aulaqis only the Ahl Khalifa, a few 'dissidents' in the armed forces and Muhammad Bubakhr bin Farid, who led the NLF-aligned section of the Aulaqi rebels, stood aloof.

The weeks went by and still the Aulaqi, although surrounded as they were on three sides, held firm. At least two attempts by pro-NLF tribesmen to invade the state were thrown back and it seemed as if the ruling family of Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom would fulfil their boast and survive. The army in Ataq were faced with a difficult problem. They were the only force strong enough to overthrow the Aulaqi Shaikh by invasion and as the majority of senior army officers were still Aulaqis, direct intervention would precipitate the break-up of the force. In any case the fighting was likely to be heavy. The Shaikh remained adamant in his refusal to let patrols enter any part of the territory he still controlled and this ruled out the Trojan Horse technique that had so successfully been employed elsewhere. Time, however, was on the side of the army and therefore the NLF. The tribesmen of Arabia have been notorious throughout the ages for their individual unpredictability, indifference and cupidity; the Aulaqis are no exception. As nothing happened the tribesmen began to drift away, the trickle became a flood and by the first week in October the passes were deserted, each back in his village firmly believing he had earned his wages. Shaikh Muhammad bin Muhsin stormed and raged to little avail—his money had almost run out and everybody seemed intent on taking a holiday. After all there were gardens to be tended and a man could not be expected to spend his days away from his family roasting on some hillside waiting for an enemy that never came. Muhammad Bubakhr, realising the ambition of a lifetime to be 'Shaikh' in Said, was the first within his group to declare himself openly for the NLF. Still the army did not feel strong enough to take the plunge and instead continued to rely on the time honoured methods of subversion and bribery.

The NLF rose to the challenge and by a brilliant stroke of organisation and co-ordination won the Aulaqi Shaikhdom, so crushing the last significant tribal opposition to their authority before independence. NLF sympathisers in Aden had not been unaware of the danger posed to their movement by the continued resistance of the Aulaqis. The tribes who were supposed to be guarding the approaches to Said had let it be known that they would be willing to stand aside at a price and the price in money and rifles was heavy. The NLF scoured the country for the rifles. The Audhali were persuaded to give up a few of those seized at Zara although these were not really enough. Then the NLF had a windfall. Three months earlier the Aden Civil Police had seized a large consignment of arms which a merchant had tried to smuggle in to sell to the highest bidder in crates labelled 'spare parts for typewriters'. These rifles were handed over to the South Arabian Police for 'training purposes' and placed in the armoury of Champion Lines where they were substituted for a like number already there. The exchange was necessary due to British insistence that rifles could be released only on the firm understanding that they were to be used

for the purpose stated and a subsequent inspection revealed that the smuggled arms were in place although a full inspection would have revealed the deficiency.

The rifles were forwarded to Lodar where only four hundred Audhali and Dathini tribesmen had gathered to take part in an expedition to conquer their hereditary foes the Aulaqi. The force never set off although the rifles got through. Alone they were not enough, money was needed and here the NLF had their second stroke of luck.

When the NLF took Mukalla they seized the currency reserves held there and this amounted to several hundred thousand pounds. This was more than adequate although the problem remained as to how to get it to Ataq. The Aulaqi Shaikh controlled all practical roads between Mukalla and Ataq and even in times of peace the movement of such a large sum across Arabia would have been a hazardous undertaking. The difficulty was solved in spectacular fashion.

Since Aden Airways had folded up, Air Djibouti had flown a service between Djibouti, Aden and Mukalla. Air Djibouti was one of the last family airlines still in existence. The single Dakota flown by Pere Astroud, his wife and daughter act as hostesses and another relative, reputedly his son, is the engineer. On 11 October he landed in Riyan, the airport for Mukalla, and found himself seized by the local NLF who rushed him off to the town where he was detained in the former British Residency. The money was then loaded aboard the aircraft and the Pakistani co-pilot told to fly to Ataq. Twice the plane set off and twice returned, the unfortunate Pakistani being unable to find his destination. The plane was guarded on the airfield between flights, a large NLF flag protruding from the cockpit. It was third time lucky and the cargo was safely delivered. Having succeeded in their mission Air Djibouti was allowed to retake possession of their aircraft and Pere Astroud thankfully flew back to Djibouti never to return.

The army in Ataq were delighted, the tribes paid off and the Shaikh, realising his position was untenable, pulled out with the remainder of his supporters but not before he had personally mortar bombed the houses of those in Said whom he believed to have gone over to his enemies. With his fall resistance in Wahidi also ceased and both parties made their way overland to Saudi Arabia. The rulers of the shaikhdom had been amongst the most unpopular in the Federation and their resistance gives a hint as to what may have happened if others had shared their determination. Muhammad bin Bubakhr was installed as the NLF representative in their place, so in a sense the Ahl Farid still ruled in Aulaqi.

To the east of the shaikhdom and south of Baihan in the armpit of South Arabia lies the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate. Here the rulers had easily defeated the forces sent against them and stood cut off from everybody and forgotten by all until after independence.

Whilst the NLF were bribing their way into the shaikhdom their brethren in the west were carrying out a similar operation with regard to the Radfan tribes. Not least amongst the ironies of South Arabia is the fact that the

tribes of Radfan whose revolt in 1963 had entered national folklore and 14 October, its anniversary, is enthusiastically celebrated by the NLF, came out in solid support for FLOSY. But everybody has a price and in this case it was the arms handed over to the South Arabian Army when the British left Habilain that paid for the quiescence of the 'wolves of Radfan'.

Meanwhile in Aden the struggle for power within the South Arabian Army was resolving itself. At long last Colonel Nasir Buraiq had been moved into a position where he was forced to retire. The fall of the Federal government with the disappearance from the scene of Fadhl bin Ali, the Minister of Defence, and Muhammad Farid al Aulaqi, the Minister for External Affairs, had seriously weakened the Colonel's position. He had cause to complain that everybody was against him. The British had tried to remove him time and time again; the NLF and non-Aulaqi faction within the army rightly saw him as the main obstacle to their ambitions and even the younger officers of his own faction regarded him as a symbol of everything old and traditional which gave them a bad name and had to be got rid of. Everybody combined and the Colonel was cornered. With somewhat bad grace he agreed that if promoted brigadier he would at once go on leave and retire with of course a brigadier's pension and gratuity in his pocket.

At the last moment it seemed as if the old soldier would change his mind but the announcement was made on 1 November without incident. The occasion was marked by a tea party in the officers' mess and was attended by all the senior officers, Aulaqi and non-Aulaqi, FLOSY and NLF as well as the few remaining British officers attached to the South Arabian Army.

It started off as a typically Arab affair with everybody saying nice things they did not mean about everybody else, but suddenly the atmosphere changed. The Colonel rose to his feet, scowled at his audience and declared 'I must speak freely. I don't think enough has been said about my thirty-three years' service. I have been forced, yes, forced to resign by a lot of political manipulators, some of whom are polluting the air with their hypocritical presence.' He paused for effect. 'They have even accused me of meddling with politics.' His audience boggled and it looked as if the Colonel was going to carry on in like manner when the situation was saved from an unexpected quarter.

Throughout the party the blind preacher, Shaikh Baihani, had been sitting in a corner nibbling biscuits. Very much a Vicar of Bray, he had weathered the Aden political storms well, going right through the spectrum from cursing cinema-goers as idolaters in 1954 when a pillar of religion to cursing the High Commission in 1967 when he was a pillar of progression. He was the sole survivor of the old guard still allowed to preach from his mosque and of late had come to play more and more the role of conciliator. He now saw his chance and hobbling forward proceeded to address the officers with all the considerable oratory at his command. There is no language like Arabic spoken well to numb the senses. The old Shaikh spoke it beautifully, after all that was how he earned

his living, and within minutes everybody was entranced: the Colonel momentarily forgotten. His message was simple. It was a call for all tribes and for all political factions to come forward and re-dedicate themselves to the cause of an independent South Arabia. Emotionally ensnared by well spoken and high flown phraseology the officers surged forward and each one recited after the Shaikh a 'great oath' in which they swore to forget their differences. The party then broke up and, emotionally exhausted, the officers made their way homewards. In the bloodshed which was to come only a few days later it is doubtful whether any of them gave a thought to the Shaikh or to his oath.

Early the following morning Nasir Buraiq, appropriately dressed in the uniform of a brigadier, inspected a farewell parade complete with camel troop in Seederseer Lines. At precisely 8.26 am on 2 November the new brigadier sulkily bade his brother officers farewell and climbed aboard a helicopter which was to take him home to the Wadi Yashbum, his pockets bulging ominously with the proceeds of his gratuity and the pension which he had wisely commuted.

As the helicopter disappeared into the distance so did the last chances of FLOSY fade away and the scene was set for the final phase of the struggle.

Chapter XI
. . . So Depart
2 November-29 November 1967

In these circumstances some things which the United Kingdom expected to settle before independence may be left pending.
George Brown, House of Commons
2 November 1967

Oh my people! The dogs are howling in the streets and the corpses of my brethren are blocking the sewers.
The Qadir al Baihani, Chief Imam of Aden
Aden Radio, 4 November 1967

When I come to tell the full story of Aden and how we recovered from the mess Sandys left us in . . .
George Brown, Sunday Times
10 April 1968

On 2 November 1967 George Brown rose before a crowded House of Commons to deliver 'new and firm decisions on South Arabia'. A few days before Sir Humphrey Trevelyan had been called out of Aden to confer with the Foreign Secretary and on the basis of his report it was decided that the time had come for the British to leave and leave as soon as possible.

George Brown recalled that over eight weeks had passed since the High Commissioner had declared his readiness to negotiate with the nationalists. It was a month since the groups had finally started talks between themselves in Cairo. Despite appeals from many quarters there had been no sign of any progress until 1 November. On the contrary there had been increasing tensions between the factions in South Arabia itself who continued to press for supremacy. Only the night before had the groups negotiating in Cairo announced they had reached agreement on matters discussed so far and they had claimed that they would shortly be able to reach agreement in the composition of a delegation to negotiate with the British government. This indeed was a welcome development and the Foreign Secretary looked forward to the negotiations at the earliest possible moment.

He had little difficulty in disposing of any obligations which the United Kingdom may have been thought to have had with regard to the Federal government. He suggested that in his statement on 19 June he had made it

quite clear that the British government had serious doubt about the soundness and durability of the Federation of South Arabia. Since then events had justified those warnings and reservations. He had also pointed out that events in Yemen, South Arabia and the Middle East in general could have effects which might make it essential to reconsider the proposals he had announced at that time. However, the United Kingdom retained the objectives it had so often stated, namely to withdraw her forces in good order and to leave behind, if possible, a united, stable and independent country, but events since June had caused it to reconsider these objectives, therefore

1 The independence of South Arabia would take place in the second half of November and all British forces would be withdrawn at that time. The precise date of independence would be announced by the middle of the month, in other words, a fortnight before it was due to take place.

   Early withdrawal would reduce any danger that British forces might become involved and sustain casualties in any renewed violence. Mr Brown considered that radical nationalist and other groups (the rest of South Arabia) must face and resolve their own problems. In these circumstances some things which the United Kingdom had expected to settle before independence might be left pending. Early withdrawal would also help the South Arabian forces who were ready to take over fully now.

2 The changed circumstances (Egyptian withdrawal) in the Yemen had removed the danger faced in June, thus the British offer of naval and air forces for a period after independence had become irrelevant. Consequently the United Kingdom had cancelled its plans although a substantial naval and air force would cover the withdrawal.

3 The offer of financial support to the Federal government for three years after independence and the offer of support for forces in the Eastern Aden Protectorate had always been subject to review if political circumstance made their continuance inappropriate. These questions would be left for a later decision when the future might be clearer. The formation and attitude of the new government would be important factors.

George Brown concluded by giving official burial to his plans to internationalise Perim. The island would stay with South Arabia unless its inhabitants against expectation were to demand otherwise.

Lord Shackleton underlined his government's view while speaking in the House of Lords later the same afternoon. He declared 'We consider we are not in a position to help South Arabia any more by our presence. We still hope that there will be a government there but if there is no government to hand over to, we can't hand over to a government.'

Humiliating as it all was there was nothing else for the British government to do except pack up and go home.

The decision came as no surprise in Aden. Since September there had been speculation that the date of withdrawal was to be brought forward and

it seemed that it would depend only on how fast the services would remove their remaining men and stores. Throughout the past three months the pace of withdrawal had been gaining momentum. The remarkable assault ship HMS *Fearless* had been ferrying vehicles to Sharjah and Bahrain and joined a naval task force gathering off Aden which was finally comprised of twenty-four ships including the 54,000 ton carrier *Eagle*, the flagship *Intrepid* and even a submarine in the biggest gathering of British naval might since Suez. It was a magnificent sight and one which must have warmed the cockles of the admiral's heart as he gazed out over the wide bay. His command normally consisted of a few minesweepers. The land forces were also reinforced. On 5 October an advance party of 42 Royal Marine Commando flew in, the main body arriving six days later aboard the commando carrier *Bulwark*. They were to take over security duties in Steamer Point from the Prince of Wales' Own who were being withdrawn. Under the plan of withdrawal the Royal Marines would be the last troops to leave South Arabia on the eve of independence.

Landmarks were passing quickly now. The headquarters of Middle East Command at Steamer Point, once the nerve centre of a great base, was abandoned, Lt General Tower moving with his staff to a temporary headquarters on Khormaksar Airfield. Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu, the Commander-in-Chief, went aboard his flagship whence he continued to direct operations ashore. Government House, the traditional seat and symbol of British authority, whence the decisions of the government in London were passed down to the people and long the political and social centre of South Arabia, was also given up and the High Commissioner and staff moved down the hill to a new embassy.

A stroll through the empty house was an eerie experience. True, from the outside it looked the same. The bougainvillea still splashed scarlet against the white walls, the two great cannons pointed impotently towards the gates, the peacocks still strutted around the car park and preened themselves in front of the long mirror which somebody had leant against a wall. Inside the silence was oppressive. It seemed as if the ghosts had walked in when Sir Humphrey walked out. Over the staircase the pictures of past governors stared reproachfully at the present and the patio, scene of so many memorable parties, was deserted. It was here that Sir Richard Turnbull's guests, pistols tucked in cumberbunds, had played skittles, a cabinet minister had got uproariously drunk and a Liberal peer announced that he had come to put the 'Zionist point of view on Palestine to the South Arabians'. The Duke of Gloucester, wiping a great expanse of white tum with his napkin, had the last word on Aden. Eventually coaxed into conversation by his hostess, he declared, 'It's damn hot.'

Flt Lt Morris, last of a long line of ADC's, remained behind to clear up, pack away the Governor's crockery grandly stamped with the British Crown and make arrangements for the occasional meeting which continued to be held in the long council chamber. The furnishings remained and the house was redecorated as a present to the new

government if it should emerge. New people, vastly different from the old, with other ideals, standards and way of life.

The new embassy was something of a come-down. A lot of thought had gone into its selection and choice eventually fell on the headquarters of the Public Works Department, planned on grandiose lines with every mechanical comfort in the great days of the base and just completed in time for independence. It is a long low block built around an air-conditioning plant and overshadowed by the nearby cliffs. Light does not seem to have been amongst the primary aims of the designers so as one official quipped, 'The British are spending their last weeks in South Arabia in the dark both literally as well as metaphorically.' No embassy is complete without a statue and the requirement for the British Embassy in Aden is filled by Queen Victoria. Sculptured by a little-known Briton, S C Tweed, she was unveiled in 1911 on the occasion of a visit by the then Prince of Wales. She had been forgotten in Steamer Point Gardens until August 1967, when it was suddenly feared that the old lady might suffer indignities at the hands of the mob. So one night, working under floodlights, a party of Royal Engineers unceremoniously heaved the 2-ton statue onto a truck and dumped it onto a pedestal facing the embassy. Throughout the whole operation the expression on Queen Victoria's face never changed but then she was good at controlling her feelings.

Other bastions of British society were also being abandoned. For eighty years membership of the Khormaksar Union Club had been a must for aspiring socialites. The committee was once said to be the most powerful body in Aden. According to legend, during the First World War when the Colony was beleaguered by the Turks it had been responsible for impelling the general to mount a long overdue offensive. The trouble had apparently been caused when members enjoying their Sunday rounds of golf had been disturbed by Turkish mortar fire based on nearby Shaikh Uthman.

Race meetings had continued to be a feature almost up to the end and even after the closure brigadiers and colonels continued to play on the polo pitch, guarded by armoured cars. Once again history repeated itself. Much to their fury the General banned his senior officers, and anybody else for that matter, from playing polo after a game had come under mortar fire. The attack was obviously intended for the nearby airfield but due either to faulty aiming or the sight of a more attractive target several bombs fell near the pitch. There were no casualties. One colonel stood up in his stirrups to get a better view and was promptly thrown. Another took advantage of the interruption to score a hotly disputed goal. Afterwards the game continued.

The withdrawal went on. A seemingly endless convoy of tanks, guns, vehicles, equipment and secondhand furniture wound its way to the dockside for shipment back to the United Kingdom or to the new base at Sharjah on the Gulf. Air traffic between Aden and the United Kingdom was continuous, reaching its height on 2 November when forty transports flew out under the protective cover of the naval task force.

Despite all these obvious signs of British withdrawal the militants still vied with one another to carry out attacks on the British troops. Inevitably it was the Arabs who suffered the heaviest casualties yet the madness continued.

There had been no real rational reason for terrorism since way back in 1964 when the British had publicly declared their intention to bring South Arabia to independence by 1968. Until Lord Beswick's famous visit in 1966 the base had been an obstacle to acceptance of the United Nations' Resolutions but the battle, instead of diminishing as the Labour government had hoped, intensified and entered its second stage: the struggle for power after British departure.

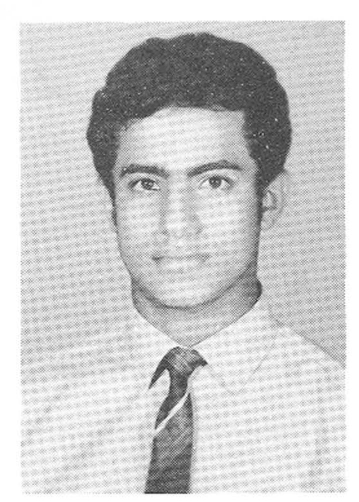
On arrival in South Arabia Sir Humphrey Trevelyan had appealed to the militants to join the government with no result but an intensification of terrorism.

When the Federal government fell to British minds the last conceivable incentive to terrorism disappeared yet still it continued unabated. The civil war between FLOSY and NLF was certainly one of the reasons. Abdul Hadi Shihab whilst Commissioner for the South Arabian Police and a known member of the NLF explained at the time that the NLF must continue to kill British soldiers to keep up their nationalist image. Each side wanted to gain the glory of having driven the British from the sacred soil. Since independence a member of FLOSY has explained privately that the last 'offensive' by the organisation in Aden was an attempt to sabotage independence! According to this man the FLOSY command, realising that they were losing the battle with the NLF, wished the British to stay and retrieve the situation for them. What they had lost on the battlefield they hoped to regain at the conference table, relying on their friends in Parliament to help them. Apparently they did not believe that the British would leave Aden in complete chaos. George Brown's speech on 2 November shattered these hopes.

Neither organisation had complete control over its followers. In the areas given up by the British, NLF and FLOSY flaunted their weapons and even opened offices. A gun or grenade could be had for the asking and many a young man took advantage of the offer and went off to prove himself against a retreating foe. Not infrequently it was the last thing he did and in the final weeks the militants suffered their highest casualties. The troops, attacked several times a day by venturous bands, whom they were politically prevented from destroying, were naturally edgy. In these circumstances it was not always the guilty that suffered: an old man was killed in Crater, in Maalla a taxi was accidentally shot up during a mortar attack, the occupants slaughtered and so on.

In the middle of October the pattern took a sinister turn with a reversion to individual killings in Steamer Point. It is now known that at least three terrorists specialising in the 'shot in the back of the head' technique were active in the area and all three operated during the final period.

Ali Thompson, who had never forgiven his grandmother for marrying an



38 Ahmad Nasir Khamati, the sniper of Steamer Point.

English sergeant and whose red hair did not allow him to forget it, ruled the back streets from behind the facade of a Youth and Sports Club—intimidating, extorting and occasionally to show off to other young men went into the Crescent and shot somebody in the back. Ali was a member of PORF.

Of all the waiters in the Crescent Hotel, Abdullah was perhaps the most cheerful. His gold teeth glinted in a friendly fashion as he doled out the green pea soup. At night, and he always preferred to operate at night, he was a 'lieutenant' in the NLF and afterwards wore his uniform to dispel any doubts. In his case terrorism ran in the family as his brother had been responsible for the Maalla bomb outrage.

Finally there was Ahmad Nasir Khamati. Young and pleasant in a mischievous sort of way, like many another 'commando' he was a well known local footballer and something of a playboy, a familiar sight racing around Aden in his blue MG which he had prudently purchased with the aid of a large loan from the government before independence. He had once been a fervent supporter of the Federal government and worked as a news announcer in broadcasting. Disillusionment had set in with defeat and he first joined forces with Ali Thompson and later set up on his own with vague connections with the NLF. His area of operation was between the Prince of Wales Pier and the post office and it is hard to escape the conclusion that Khamati killed for the sheer pleasure of it—it was so much more exciting than football.

Derek Rose, the youngest political officer still serving with the High Commission, was the first victim. A brilliant Arabist, Rose was one of the last Englishmen still in contact with the Adenis. He was immensely popular with all races in the past two years and had seen it all, riots and

gunbattles as well as the seemingly endless political manoeuvring and betrayal but his faith in the essential goodness of humanity remained apparently untouched.

At 11.30 am on 20 October he bade goodbye to M. Rais, the Red Cross representative, in the Crescent Hotel and drove back towards the new embassy a mile and a half away. Shortly after noon the Aden Police found his car smashed up against the wall of the pier and Rose inside shot through the back of the head.

The remaining members of the British community were shocked and saddened. It was not only that Rose was well liked, it was the waste and futility of it all. As one man remarked, 'If I lost a son in Vietnam then perhaps I would be comforted knowing that it was for a cause, in Aden it would be for nothing.'

A week later a Danish Sea Captain, J S Thiesen, who was a regular caller in Aden, was shot in the back after visiting his shipping agents whilst his wife and daughters waited for lunch on board his 219 ton ship riding at anchor in Aden harbour. There was no doubt that this was an NLF killing and even they seemed to realise that there was no excuse for it. Publicly claiming Thiesen was a 'spy' they privately apologised.

The evening before Thiesen was murdered Alan Macdonald, the Public Service Commissioner to the Federal government and a colonial servant of many years standing, had finished his dinner in the Crescent Hotel as usual and was walking the hundred yards from the main building to the hotel annexe where he lived. He noticed that there did not seem to be anybody around although he thought little of it. Half way to his destination at the end of an ill-lit side street he heard somebody running behind him. He turned quickly and grappled with a small man who had been about to shoot him in the back. Spare and strong, Macdonald was more than a match for his opponent who wrenched himself away and fled into the night, but not before shooting the Scotsman in the leg and stomach. Macdonald staggered on into the annexe and was rushed to hospital. A few days later, back in the Royal Air Force hospital at Wroughton in Wiltshire, he was up and about serving less hardy patients with their early morning cup of tea. Then there was Walter Mechtel, former officer of the German Army turned television reporter, eight years a prisoner of the Russians. A veteran of Stalingrad and Vietnam. One afternoon, sitting in the Crescent Hotel lounge he complained of a headache and announced that he was going to walk the half mile to the post office and post a letter to his wife of one month. Other journalists tried to dissuade him and Arabs on the hotel staff, hearing his intention, offered to go and post the letter themselves. Mechtel brushed his wellwishers aside and stepped out into the sunlight. A quarter of an hour later he was dead—two bullets in the back of the head in the usual fashion as he turned away from posting his letter. He was the last European to be killed in South Arabia before independence. Nobody had a grudge against him and his sole offence was the possession of a white face. The NLF disclaimed responsibility and arrested several people, including

the waiter and Khamati. Later all except Khamati were released, an NLF spokesman alleging that he had carried out the murder on the 'orders of British intelligence' and would be charged and put on trial. In fact Khamati had recently taken it upon himself to execute what he believed to be traitors to the NLF, including Faisal Luqman, a senior executive in the Aden Port Trust. He had become something of an embarrassment and the NLF kept him under guard where he could do no more harm. After independence he was released.

British dead and injured were always taken to the large RAF hospital at Steamer Point and when that closed down to the RAF hospital at Khormaksar Beach which was also used by the South Arabian Army. During the last few weeks casualties were flown out to the naval task force. Arabs went to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The five hundred bed hospital was once the boast of Aden and one of the finest in all Arabia. Tribesmen and their families from all over South Arabia, the Yemen and even Saudi Arabia flocked to its doors to ask for the free treatment which they duly received. Like every other government department or organisation in South Arabia the staff were affected by the winds of revolution and towards the end became bitterly divided amongst themselves. Aden had more than its share of trained doctors although most of these preferred to practise outside South Arabia in the Bayswater Road and elsewhere. Many of the doctors and senior nursing staff at the hospital were therefore Indian or British. As the situation worsened the Indians gave notice, weakening the already shaky morale of the staff.

The civil war between FLOSY and the NLF entered the very wards. Casualties from either side had to be very careful which bed they were placed in. The oath of Hippocrates was set aside and there is more than a suspicion that some patients did not receive the kind of treatment they had a right to expect. The walls of the formerly spotless hospital were daubed with multi-coloured slogans which shouted the political opinions of the staff. 'British get out', 'Death to Asnag', 'Long live FLOSY' and so on. Despite this, relations between the British staff and the Arabs had always been most cordial. This happy state of affairs came to an end one day at the end of August. Dr Charles Murphy, the Senior Medical Officer, was getting into his car in the hospital park when a male nurse passed by and tossed a grenade. Fortunately the bomb rolled under the car, and exploded harmlessly. A second nurse saw what happened, pulled a pistol out of his pocket and shot down the doctor's assailant. Then frightened by the temerity of what he had done he fled the same day to Taiz to explain himself at FLOSY headquarters.

A week later the first heavy fighting between the factions broke out in Shaikh Uthman and the wounded poured into the hospital. Differences were momentarily forgotten and the staff coped, but only just. The experience had come as a shock and came in time to prepare them for things to come.

As Delegate-General for the Red Cross, André Rochat was profoundly interested in the problems of the Queen Elizabeth. The shortage of doctors would get more critical as independence approached and a further outbreak of fighting would cause a complete breakdown in the hospital's already overstrained resources. Rochat therefore suggested putting the hospital under Red Cross protection. The health authorities needed little persuading. Muhammad al Bar, successor to Murphy, was enthusiastic. Although up to that point discussions had been confidential, al Bar at once cabled the world on behalf of his NLF-aligned Arab Doctors' Association, demanding that the Red Cross take over immediately. The High Commission agreed instantly. Rochat was reasonably certain that Mackawee and Asnag would consent to respect Red Cross neutrality on behalf of FLOSY. He therefore set off for Zingibar to gain the agreement of Qahtan al Shaabi. The NLF leader harangued him for two hours—'Bring supplies, bring doctors, my people are starving. Do all you can.' But when he learnt that the Red Cross flag would fly over the hospital and that it would become neutral territory his attitude changed. Not one inch of South Arabian soil could be given up—the suggestion infringed not only on its sovereignty but also on the dignity of the NLF. It was useless for Rochat to explain that 124 nations had signed the Red Cross Convention, al Shaabi would have nothing of it. His answer was a flat no. On hearing of their leader's decision the Arab Doctors' Association hastily withdrew their earlier appeal, claiming that the hour of crisis had passed. This no more than a week before the most savage and bitter fighting of the whole pre-independence period was to erupt in the streets of Shaikh Uthman and al Mansura.

By all logic the first few days of November should have brought optimism and relief. The fighting seemed over. George Brown had announced British withdrawal in no uncertain terms. The discussions between FLOSY and the NLF had seemingly come to a successful conclusion in Cairo and they were reportedly talking about a joint delegation to receive independence from the British. Even more important to some people Aden Port looked forward to the arrival of two Egyptian tankers with crude oil for the refinery. Instead an air of tension lay across Aden like a cloud. Few people were on the streets and in the areas of Aden out of British control no man's hand strayed far from his gun. The reason was not hard to find. With sweeping NLF successes in the states the only stronghold left to FLOSY were the Aden townships of al Mansura, Shaikh Uthman and Dar Saad. Since their tactical victory in the first days of September the FLOSY position had been seriously weakened. They had been unable to prevent infiltration and over three thousand armed tribesmen, mainly Audhalis, roamed the streets. When asked why they had come, one answered, 'Guns and money. We await the new government which will distribute the treasures of the sultans.' Most of these tribesmen were from states under the control of the NLF and it took little to persuade them that FLOSY stood between them and their gold.

FLOSY also knew that supplies had been cut off. Like the British in the South, the Egyptians in the Yemen were also withdrawing. As they retreated into a bridgehead around Hodeidah FLOSY were abandoned to the Yemeni Republicans. The Republicans had nothing against FLOSY but confiscated their arms dumps as like everybody else they needed them. More important still with the removal of Colonel Nasir Buraiq from the South Arabian Army the chances that it would side with FLOSY or even remain neutral virtually disappeared.

If the delegates conferring in Cairo dreamt that the success of their discussions would prevent a flare up in Aden they were mistaken. Neither side could control its supporters and relations between the FLOSY and NLF commando in Shaikh Uthman could not have been worse. They hated each other. The NLF openly boasted that after independence their rivals would be put up against a wall and shot. FLOSY, nervous, trigger-happy, yet confident in the knowledge that they were well armed, had plenty of supplies and in every previous encounter in the area they had come out on top.

The South Arabian Army arbitration council which consisted of three colonels, three members of the NLF and three of FLOSY, was at work every day holding the two sides apart. The final break came at one of their meetings. Tempers were unusually high as both parties considered that they had been betrayed by the Cairo talks. According to FLOSY the NLF tried to ambush their party on its way back from the last meeting. The NLF have it the other way around and claimed that three of their supporters were killed 'when a gangster hurled a grenade.' Whatever the truth of the incident it was the spark which set the town alight. The battle started at about 2 pm on 3 November and by nightfall over fifty lay dead and many hundreds more wounded. FLOSY and the NLF alike shot at anything which moved so that most of the casualties were civilian. The army issued appeal after appeal to both sides to stop the fighting but only achieved limited success here and there. As before FLOSY at first seemed to be winning. From three strongpoints—Dar Saad, al Mansura and Colonel Buraiq's flats in the centre of Shaikh Uthman they began to slowly surround their enemies. At the decisive moment the South Arabian Army took a hand.

The army was essentially NLF in sympathy and only needed an excuse to interfere. This was soon provided. At about 10.30 on the morning of the 4th a patrol left al Mansura jail and moved through the town. Some minutes later it reported that it was under fire and requested permission to fire back. It was given very quickly. An urgent message to headquarters and the affirmative reply. From then on whether they liked it or not and most of them did, the army was committed to the NLF. The fighting raged on decisively all day with the army intervening more and more against FLOSY. In the evening they were able to impose a truce and curfew. At the same time they told both sides to withdraw all armed men from the area within three days. Although the appeal seemed reasonable on the surface it

was ingenious. The NLF could comply with ease. FLOSY had nowhere to go to and retreat into the desert would have been suicidal. During the night senior army officers met the NLF command and concerted plans for the morrow.

At first light the fighting was renewed with increased ferocity. At first the army confined itself to skirmishing. The officers were still unsure of their men and their position awaited the outcome of the political battle in headquarters which controlled the situation and most of the Aulaqis were had been dragging their feet. On the previous day one had refused to bring his battalion into Shaikh Uthman and were making a last minute bid to save the situation. The current was too strong for them, it was the headquarters which controlled he situation and most of the Aulaqis were out of it commanding battalions. They were virtually unable to communicate with each other and were leaderless. In the end ten senior officers, including three battalion commanders, resigned. When the news that the resignations were pending reached Shaikh Uthman the army openly sided with the NLF and set about wiping out the FLOSY forces with all the power at its command.

The first strongpoint to be assailed was their former colonel's flats defended by strong forces led by his son, himself a lance corporal in the army. The defenders put up a desperate resistance and even after Saladin armoured cars with their powerful 76mm guns had been brought in they still held out. Eventually the building was dynamited. A patrol of British Hussars watching the battle through a telescope from a windmill on the salt flats saw it jerk into the air and crash into the street like a pack of cards. The surviving defenders were shot down as they struggled out of the dust, arms raised above their heads. The body of their commander was later found lying amongst the rubble. Some say that he had been stabbed.

The FLOSY defenders of al Mansura were equally stubborn. They even sallied out and surrounded the army contingent in the jail. Late on the 5th they were driven back onto their own strongpoints, which were demolished one by one with the aid of Carl Gustav anti-tank weapons. The fighting in Dar Saad into which most FLOSY remnants retreated, was the most bitter of all. No quarter was asked or given as the army and NLF hunted down their enemies house by house. By dusk the battle was over. Few FLOSY survivors managed to escape and the NLF with the army at its back were in complete control.

Early in the day a belated statement had been issued from Headquarters, South Arabian Army,* to the effect that it recognised the NLF as the sole

*In Army Headquarters, British influence was fast disappearing. The daily situation report had always been produced in English and Arabic. Until 1 November the translation had always been made from the English. On this date responsibility for the production of the report passed into South Arabian hands, and the procedure reversed.

Only four bi-lingual reports were produced, the last containing the following paragraph: '*Little Aden*. Throughout the morning the office of the Commander, Little Aden, was surrounded by forty women who refused to go away until he had personally satisfied each one.' South Arabian Army Sitrep, 4 November, paragraph 4.

representative of the people and called upon the British to negotiate independence with it straight away. To keep in with the times it also renamed itself the Arab Armed Forces of Occupied South Yemen. The purge of the Aulaqi officers, begun during the fighting, was completed a few days later when seventy-four officers were asked to resign. They took their commuted pensions and gratuities and left, mostly for the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom. In many ways they were fortunate. The senior Arab officer (the force was still under the nominal command of Brigadier Dye) remained an Aulaqi. Colonel Muhammad Ahmad Aulaqi owed allegiance only to the army and continued as Brigadier-elect.

By local standards the carnage was severe. There was no reliable count of the dead who probably exceeded three hundred including twenty soldiers. Hundreds were wounded. The staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, working night and day, soon ran out of blood and broadcast that it was pointless to bring in wounded without a blood donor. Still bloodstained the taxis turned in through the gate to dump their grisly loads of dead and dying to get whatever treatment was possible. On the first day of the fighting a gang of armed men had turned up and kidnapped two of the male nurses under the eyes of the horrified staff. They were whisked away to Shaikh Uthman to look after NLF wounded and later taken upcountry to do the same there. After this more armed police were drafted in, ostensibly to protect the staff from more intrusions. They soon made known their NLF sympathies and those who still had any regard for FLOSY quickly forgot it.

Whilst the main contest was being fought out in the Shaikh Uthman, al Mansura, Dar Saad complex there had been other outbreaks elsewhere. In Steamer Point the NLF rounded up Ali Thompson and his men while the Marines and pressmen had a grandstand view of the fighting from their position on Clock Tower Hill. In Little Aden FLOSY killers firing from a car gunned down a pro-NLF policeman sitting with his family outside his home. Only Crater, soundly pro-FLOSY and under the tight control of the Argylls, remained quiet. There was real fear that to gain control the NLF would have to turn Crater into another battleground. The danger was removed by the South Arabian Army and Police who went from door to door quietly arresting leading FLOSY personalities whilst the Argylls held the ring.

Once in control the NLF, often accompanied by army or police escorts, went openly about the Colony arresting those suspected of being sympathisers of the former regime, FLOSY or the British. Nobody was safe, not even the army. On 8 November about twenty officers and soldiers were arrested during the night and taken to Zingibar for interrogation. Major Muhammad Salih, a minor member of the Fadhli ruling family, was standing outside the officers' mess in Seederseer Lines when three armed NLF civilians tried to bundle him into the back of a truck. Breaking away the Major ran into the operations room, manned by two Arab and one British officer. They stood aside as the Major was dragged away. With such things happening in the army there was no hope for anybody else. Cen

Jones, the Director of Health Services and the last British civil servant still at work with the South Arabian government, finally laid down his pen when armed police broke into his Khormaksar office and hauled off a member of the staff.

Many of those questioned by the various NLF command were released after a few days but the fate of others is uncertain. Prison camps were set up in Zingibar and Lodar. At independence an NLF estimate put the number of people held there as 1,500, including some four hundred in the Zingibar jail, built to hold fifty.

The fierce fighting in Shaikh Uthman and the general deterioration of conditions seriously alarmed the High Commissioner who produced a plan—code named operation 'Figgis'—for the crash evacuation of the hundred or so remaining British civilians. Most of these lived in two guarded compounds at opposite ends of the Colony. Each individual was handed instructions to pack a suitcase, collect twenty-four hours' iron rations and a blanket. As soon as the words 'Figgis Figgis Figgis' were broadcast over the Forces' Radio they were all to head for assembly points, the whereabouts of which were passed by word of mouth for increased security. From here they were to be airlifted by helicopter to the waiting fleet.

The plan was greeted with calm and a certain amount of good humoured cynicism as those with a nervous disposition had long since departed. Conversation mainly speculated at the odd code name.

It was soon revealed that Figgis was a legendary political officer in the Hadhramaut at the time when British paternalism in the area was at its height. Figgis, so the story went, was wont to disappear into the desert with a crate of gin and decline to answer any signals sent to him. Eventually in reply to persistent queries regarding his views on the situation he telegraphed 'All Bedouins are bastards—Figgis' and was promptly dismissed by a scandalised Governor. Ever after, when political officers found life unbearable, the High Commission would receive a signal which merely read 'Figgis was right.' By November 1967 most Britons still in Aden would have thoroughly agreed with him.

As soon as the extent of the NLF victory became known their delegation in Cairo not unsurprisingly broke off discussions with FLOSY and appealed to the British for direct talks. There was a three day delay whilst a dialogue with the High Commission was established through Colonel Abdullah Salih. The South Arabian Police Chief was fast becoming a power in the land and was quick to use his not inconsiderable contribution to NLF victory to consolidate his position. On 14 November it was finally announced that talks would begin a week later and the venue was to be Geneva.

During the three day wait for the announcement the last attacks on British troops took place in Steamer Point. A young Marine was seriously wounded, the last British casualty. Mechtel was murdered a week later. Throughout the final period André Rochat was in his element. He had gone

into Shaikh Uthman in the thick of the fighting to relieve the misfortunes of the inmates of the lunatic asylum, abandoned by their nurses and without water. Now he turned his attention to the remaining detainess. Thirty-one were still held in the Steamer Point guardhouse, more as hostages to fortune than anything else. They were by no means leading terrorists and were mostly amongst those captured by troops in the last skirmishes. Twenty-one of these were members of FLOSY and unanimously declared they had no intention of trusting themselves to an NLF-ruled South Arabia. Rochat made arrangements for them to be flown to Egypt. On 16 November the prison gates opened and the FLOSY men boarded a United Arab Airlines plane whilst the NLF were noisily feted through the streets of Maalla.

Now the NLF were in various ways acting as interim government. Through the army they issued a two-day ultimatum calling for the surrender of all weapons in Lahej and Aden. Anybody holding arms after it expired would be subject to dire penalties, including death. Here they met their first difficulty. NLF commandos declined to comply and the ultimatum had to be extended 'because it was proceeding so satisfactorily.'* Elsewhere difficulties were beginning to arise. In the 'liberated' states NLF commissars, often young schoolteachers and even students, had been sent to enlighten the tribes. At first they were received with interest as possible bringers of gifts, afterwards when they began to ask for taxes the attitude changed. The Audhalis of Aryab succinctly summed it up. 'We did not get rid of our sultans to pay taxes to the likes of you,' they declared to a young unfortunate sent to treat with them. Some tribes were completely beyond the pale. The NLF command at Fadhli received a short answer to the letter sent to Salih Lahman al Qashmimi, the famed bandit of Ahl Jabal demanding allegiance. 'I have received your letter,' ran the reply, 'and as we have assisted you in ridding ourselves of the false Sultan please be so good as to set aside his Zingibar house and a car, preferably the one with automatic gears, as my just reward.' There were going to be no taxes from the Ahl Jabal.

Money was becoming an increasing problem for the NLF. They were just beginning to realise that the sultans had not been so rich after all and the country was on the brink of financial disaster. Nearly three-quarters of the Federal budget† had been covered in one way or another by British subsidies. Most of the rest came via Aden port, now lying idle. The armed forces, large in proportion to the country's means, would have to be paid lest it turn against its new masters. Unemployment with the closing of the base amounted to over thirty thousand and of course the tribes would expect to receive their dues. No wonder NLF leaders meeting in Geneva were deeply concerned with the financial problems of a United Kingdom facing devaluation.

*NLF statement 20 November.

†£12½ million out of £17 million.

These problems were thrust into the background as Briton and Arab prepared to celebrate independence each in his own way.

On 25 November the twenty-four ships which made up the naval task force stood in review order as Sir Humphrey Trevelyan in black suit and homburg stood on the bridge of a minesweeper waving enthusiastically at the lines of sailors giving three good imperial cheers for the High Commissioner as he sailed past. He then transferred to the flagship *Intrepid* for a flypast of jets preceded by a swarm of helicopters.

On the same evening British troops withdrew from Maalla, Steamer Point and Crater without a hitch. Orders had been issued that the withdrawal should be done as quietly as possible. The Argylls, however, did not let the chance slip by and put on a *son et lumière* performance with floodlights and pipers playing 'The Barren Rocks of Aden'.

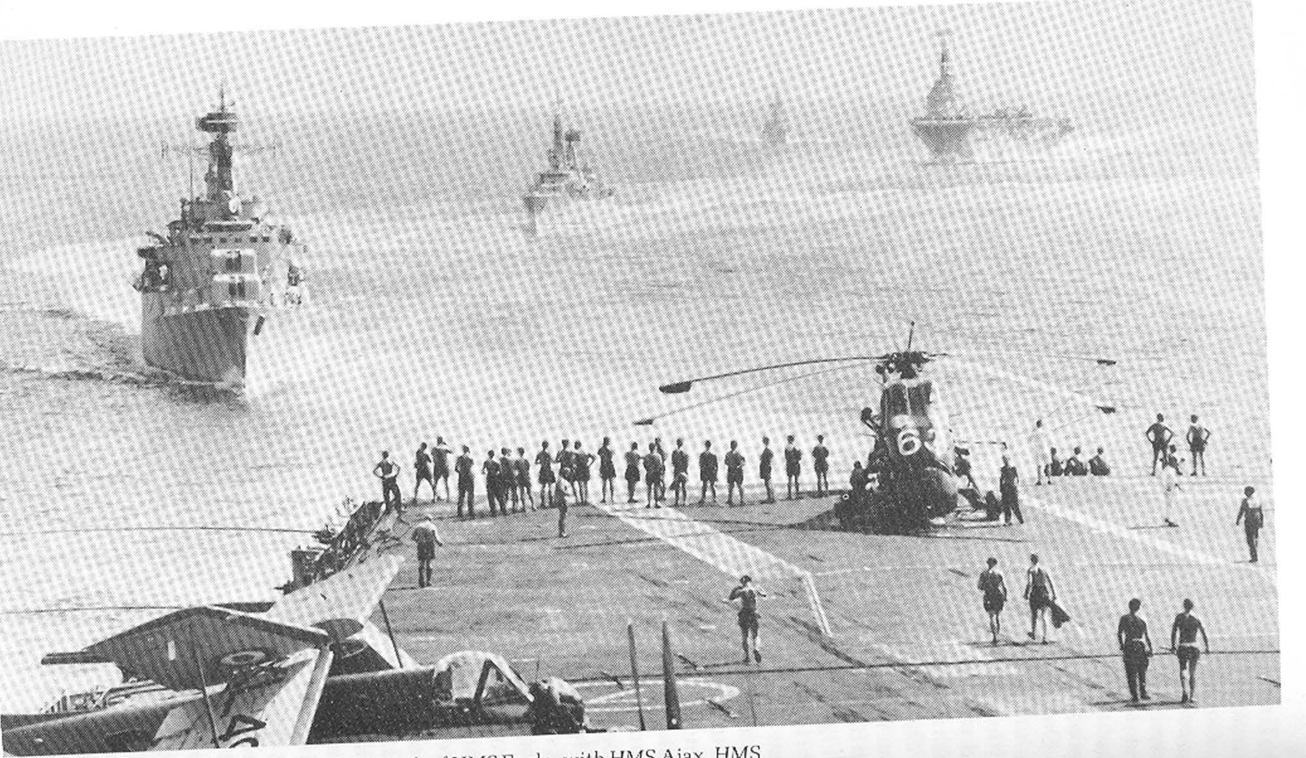
The troops all moved into the Khormaksar enclave and were flown home over the next three days in the biggest operation of its kind undertaken by the British Air Force since the Berlin airlift.

Flying over Maalla in a helicopter to celebrate his birthday with the fleet, Sir Humphrey had an aerial view of the Arab preparations. South Arabians from all parts of the country had converged on Aden for the celebrations.

All worked hard to welcome the NLF delegation expected home any minute from Geneva. Multi-coloured lights, illuminated avenues, NLF flags and slogans had appeared as if by magic. Taxi and lorry drivers created bedlam as they practised honking out 'N—L—F'. Al Ittihad was renamed People's City and the NLF declared a national holiday for independence.

The British went serenely on with their withdrawal almost as if the other half did not exist. There was a traditional colonial goodbye for Sir Humphrey on Khormaksar airfield. The departure was preceded by a champagne party, then, still wearing his black homburg, Britain's last High Commissioner in South Arabia inspected a guard of honour as the band played a medley of pop tunes ending up with 'Things ain't what they used to be.' As the High Commissioner's plane moved down the runway the guns of the armoured cars on parade were lowered as was his personal standard, a blue Arab dhow embossed on a Union Jack. For the rest there was still one day to go.

The Geneva talks were coming to an end. The British, led by Lord Shackleton, had no hesitation in handing over independence to Qahtan al Shaabi and his men. The only real point of difficulty over sovereignty was the Kuria Muria Islands. These had been given to Queen Victoria by a Sultan of Muscat as a birthday present and the British, after duly consulting the seventy aboriginal inhabitants, had handed them back to his successor. They are nine hundred miles from Aden and the number of South Arabians to have visited them is few and far between. Nevertheless the act was considered dismemberment of the new nation and dark threats were muttered about the consequences. The new flag had a blue triangle let into it to show the NLF concern for its 'overseas territories'.



39 The British leave South Arabia. The deck of HMS Eagle, with HMS Ajax, HMS Albion, HMS Minerva and HMS London in the background.

The other stumbling block was predictably aid. The NLF demanded £60 million down 'as compensation for British exploitation of the territory over the previous one hundred and twenty-eight years'. They got £12 million, most of which was already in Aden and the promise that further aid would be discussed at a future date. With that the NLF had to be satisfied.

The British Forces' radio station at Steamer Point closed down on 28 November with 'Old Lang Syne' and a final service was held in the Anglican church, the altar being shipped home. Early the next morning the last nine hundred Marines began their evacuation, the honour of the last man to leave falling to Colonel Morgan, the Commander of 42 Commando.

Brigadier Dye formally handed over command of the South Arabian Army to Colonel Muhammad Ahmad.

In the evening there were torchlight processions and dancing in the streets, rhythmic tattoos were beaten on the roofs of cars as NLF slogans were chanted by wildly excited crowds holding aloft gigantic pictures of Qahtan Shaabi. There were wild motorcades and inevitably the black veiled women were there beating tambourines and adding their shrill voices to the chorus. There was no sleeping in Aden that night.

In the early morning a vast crowd assembled around the airport to greet Qahtan al Shaabi. There were wild motorcades and inevitably the black conference he started off on a triumphal drive around Aden welcomed everywhere by cheering crowds. The revolution was victorious, the People's Republic of South Yemen had been born and his troubles had really begun.

The evening before Ronnie Burroughs, the British Chargé d'Affaires had presided over a quiet ceremony when the Union Jack was lowered for the last time outside the embassy. As he did so almost symbolically the twenty-four ships in the harbour slipped their anchors and sailed away.

39 The British leave South Arabia. The deck of HMS Eagle, with HMS Ajax, HMS Albion, HMS Minerva and HMS London in the background.

Epilogue

George feels desperate because it's different to what he promised.

His (George Brown's) colleagues considered it a wonderfully lucky and fortunate result. That the regime he backed should have been overthrown by terrorists and forced our speedy withdrawal is nothing but good fortune—chaos will rule after we've gone and there'll be one major commitment out—thank God.

Richard Crossman's diary entries for 25-30 October 1967 on South Arabia

In the former British military camps the last air conditioner had been prised from the walls and trundled away, and the police had sold every stick of furniture looted from the houses of the former Federal Ministers. The gala arches proclaiming independence still stood but the enthusiasm which greeted its arrival soon ebbed.

In Government House, now renamed The Palace of the President, Qahtan al Shaabi had formed his first government. By explaining that world leaders did not respect statesmen under the age of forty, he persuaded his younger colleagues to make him President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The rest of the government were young men in their thirties, all named had been known for years as NLF members but dismissed as men of little importance. The Minister of Defence was Ali Salim al Baidh, a Hadrami and a Marxist who had made his name with mortar attacks on Government House. Foreign Affairs were handled by Saif al Dhalai, a student surveyor. The Petroleum Union leaders, Mahmud Ushaish and Abdul Malik Ismail, the real founders of the NLF in Aden, were rewarded with the portfolios of Industry and Labour. The President's nephew Faisal Abdul Latif al Shaabi became Minister of Economic Planning, while the primary schoolteacher turned killer, Abdul Fatah Ismail, became Minister of Information with special responsibilities for relations with North Yemen. Muhammad Ali Haithem, a Dathini who had played a role in bringing the army in on the side of the NLF, became Minister of Finance and Adhil Khalifa, just out of school, became Minister of Justice and together with Abdullah Khamari set about organising show trials of Federal supporters who had fallen into their hands. There was, however, to be little retaliation against those who had worked directly for

the British: but for friends, relatives and supporters of the former Sultans and of FLOSY it was a different matter. Some two thousand of these were thrown into jail and the number of political prisoners held without trial has remained fairly constant at around three thousand up until the time of writing. The dead and executed were replaced by later opponents of the regime. Judith Hart when Minister for Overseas Development used the record of the People's Republic of South Yemen on human rights as an excuse to cut off Britain's aid commitments. A Red Cross request to visit them was rebuffed by the government and the International Committee of Jurists has expressed disquiet without effect.

Internationally the new state was recognised and took its place at the United Nations. Administratively the country was divided into six Provinces which roughly coincided with the cell organisation of the NLF when it had been underground.

The economic situation was precarious. The troubles, combined with the closure of the Suez Canal had cut the port of Aden's trade by 80 per cent. The evacuation of the base put another 10,000 out of work and the virtual ceasing of British aid meant the loss of some 60% of the country's income. Furthermore, as most of the merchant community had left, the new regime did not scruple to hold relatives who had remained behind to ransom. The minority communities, the Somalis, the Indians and even the Yemenis felt that the time of troubles had come and quietly packed their bags. In the six months after independence the population of Aden was to drop by over 100,000.

Politically the NLF soon found itself divided between the traditional nationalists led by Qahtan al Shaabi, who wanted to maintain the traditional structure of society, and the Left led by Abdul Fatah Ismail who wanted radical socialist change. The armed forces which held the balance of power sided with the traditionalists.

Conflict was postponed by dramatic events in North Yemen. In September 1967 Saudi and Egyptian representatives had reached agreement in Khartoum. The Egyptian forces agreed to withdraw and Saudi Arabia to cease giving aid to the Royalists. On 12 October the Egyptians evacuated Sana taking with them all the heavy equipment, armoured cars and field guns. On 5 November President Sallal left the Yemen ostensibly to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in Moscow: privately he had let it be known he would not return and was retiring to Iraq. The next day in a quiet military coup he was declared deposed.

The Royalists and the Zaidi tribes went onto the offensive and by December some 20,000 were besieging Sana led by the Imam's cousin Muhammad bin Hussain. Memories of the sack of the city by the Imam Ahmad in 1948 strengthened the resolve of the 3,000 defenders. Al Amri flew in to take command and issued arms to the citizens who were formed into special Republican brigades, the Popular Resistance Force (PRF). As it was Ramadan, the Royalists were not too active in the first days of the

siege and this allowed the Republicans to bring in reinforcements. Algeria and the Soviet Union carried out a massive air lift of aid and also gave financial support. In January 600 volunteers came into the city from Aden whilst further South Yemeni support was sent to Hodeidah together with arms and ammunition. Around Harib and Baihan in the east, South Yemeni and Republican forces co-operated in a diversion against Royalist tribes. Muhammad bin Hussain launched three vain assaults but was unable to co-ordinate his forces who began to drift away, and on 8 February 1968 a force, including South Yemeni volunteer units, climbed up the road from Hodeidah and relieved the city. Russian and South Yemeni aid had contributed to the victory but the immediate success had been won by the PRF.

No sooner had the siege been lifted than the Republicans split into two opposing camps: the Republican tribalists led by al Amri and the Shaikhs, and the Shafai Left, comprising most of the PRF, and encouraged and supported by the South Yemenis. In Hodeidah Abdul Fatah Ismail had organised a trades union and a People's Militia which in March 1968 tried to seize a shipment of Russian arms. Al Amri, then in Cairo, hurried home and gathering a tribal army, marched into the port, crushed the PRF and shot their leaders. The final showdown came in Sana in August when the PRF and the tribes fought a three-day pitched battle in which over 1,000 people were killed and much of the town destroyed. The Left were routed. The tribesmen, much reinforced by Royalists who had been deserting the Imam since the spring, were all Zaidis, the losers all Shafais. Once the threat from the Left had disappeared al Amri opened negotiations with the Royalist chiefs. The Saudis indicated they would stop supporting the Imam if the Republicans held down the Left and adopted a foreign policy in line with their own. The war ended in 1970. On 28 March a Republican delegation to the Islamic Conference in Jedda reached agreement with King Faisal. Fighting would cease as would Saudi aid to the Imam. The embryo Republican National Assembly was enlarged to include eighteen Royalists and Royalist ministers joined the government. Only the Imam's family, the Hamid al Din, were barred from returning. The Imam retired to England where he still lives, deserted by all he trusted, a forlorn figure known locally as 'the Squire of Chobham'.

In South Yemen independence had not brought the rewards which many who had helped the NLF achieve power had expected. The first to be disillusioned was probably Nagwa Mackawee, head of the NLF women's movement in Aden. Reunited with her detainee husband she soon found that marital bliss was not to be. On the day following independence he threw a kettle of scalding water over her and appalled colleagues quickly arranged for Nagwa to be flown to hospital in Cairo. The Aden Police Commissioner, Abdul Hadi Shihab, who had done so much to help the NLF in Aden was soon disabused of any remaining thoughts he may have had of maintaining his power. Given the job of clearing up the dumps of arms in which Aden abounded he found himself

unable to resist the temptation to put aside one lot which had been imported by a relative. Betrayed by a constable, he was thrown into his own jail.

On 19 December the NLF felt strong enough to purge the army. Colonel Muhammad Aulaqi was removed and Colonel Ali Abdullah Maiseri made Commander, whilst another Dathini, Husain Uthman, took over the former Federal Guard and became Chief of Staff. Colonel Ali Abdullah was later murdered on the orders of Abdul Fatah Ismail. By this time the final pockets of resistance had been overcome. The last remaining Federal Minister in the field, the Amir Muhammad bin Abdullah of the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate, held out in Nisab for some months. The army moved in but resistance was strenuous, the tribes inflicting severe losses before being subdued by 25 pounder guns brought down from Baihan. The Amir was captured and thrown into jail. His uncle, the aged Awadh bin Salih, nominal Sultan of the Upper Aulaqi, was turned out of his house and went to live in the suq. The old man had suffered from diabetes for years and the illness had already cost him a leg. His supply of insulin cut off he soon fell into a coma and died.

Still one Sultan remained, Muhammad Aidrous of Yafa' who ever since 1958 had watched events from his mountain eyrie at al Qara. He was suspicious but eventually flattery overcame his doubts and he went to the beach at Zingibar expecting to be greeted as a hero. Instead he was seized, disappeared into prison, and some say he was shot.*

The general policies of the Hadrami NLF, even if they were often proclaimed as more than rhetoric, were often in conflict with the Aden based leadership. Attempts by the NLF Secretary General, Faisal al Shaabi, to discipline the Hadrami sector met with no success. A leading figure in the disputes was the Minister of Defence Ali al Baidh, himself a Hadrami. In January 1968 he flew to Moscow on receiving the promise of aid, and on his return dismissed the British officers still serving the South Arabian Forces. Qahtan al Shaabi was furious, he had not been consulted and realised that the Russians were backing his opponents.

The clash between the two wings of the NLF came at the Fourth Congress, 2-8 March 1968, called to agree on a programme for the future of the country. The divisions within the Party now became public. The President was opposed by the Left who demanded a Marxist state and by tribal representatives who felt they had been insufficiently rewarded. The Congress gave overwhelming support to the Left. Whilst the army supported the President and saw the Left as a threat to its power, especially resenting the decision to raise a People's Militia and attach Political Commissars to the Regular Units.

Later in the month the army broke up a NLF meeting in Aden and so prevented a Leftist coup. The nerve of the President failed, instead of

* He was machine-gunned to death in the company of his two half-brothers on the beach near Ja'ar.

supporting the army he issued a bewildering service of conflicting orders. Faced with pro-Left demonstrations in Abyan and the Hadramaut he ordered the arrest of the army officers responsible and as a further boost to his image rushed through a land reform under which confiscated lands were handed over to NLF supporters. The Hadramaut broke off relations with Aden and announced *de facto* secession. Other groups decided on rebellion but the plans for the uprising only partly materialised. On 14 May 400 extremists seized Ja'ar some thirty miles east of Aden in the foothills of the Yafa'i mountains. They had the support of most of the tribes but one, the Yafa'i Ahl Shams, who were reluctant. Their village was promptly surrounded and the men massacred. In their mountains the Yafa'is had felt slighted ever since Shaikh Ali Atif had been captured by the Fadhli NLF the previous autumn, the arrest and murder of their own Sultan, and they were further enraged by the attack on the Ahl Shams which finally goaded them into action.

Apparently unaware of the hornets' nest that they had stirred up and the storm gathering in the dark hills above the town, the rebels returned to Ja'ar, where they greeted a fresh batch of supporters who had arrived from Aden and gave themselves over to discussion.

One of the leaders, Hassan al Zaghir, the killer of Sir Arthur Charles, was sent down the coast on reconnaissance with a bazooka and machine gun party. Here on 22 May he was found by the first government patrols. He put up a spirited resistance until deserted by his men. He was shot through the head and his body dragged behind an armoured car.

The army, loyal to al Shaabi, advanced on Ja'ar. It took them no time to discover that others had preceded them. The town was a smoking ruin. Over 300 bodies, many of them women and children, lay in the streets. The Yafa'is had taken their revenge and withdrawn to the mountains. All that the army could do was to clear up. Some of the rebels escaped and retreated up the Wadi Bana. Here they fell prey to the wolves of Radfan, still stubborn supporters of FLOSY, and were decimated, only a handful of survivors making their way to the comparative safety of the Yemen.

No sooner had the President dealt with the Left than he was faced by a serious uprising in Aulaqi instigated by the former Rulers who had recaptured Said. In August Colonel Abdullah Salih Sabah, who had done so much to ensure the NLF takeover in the East, changed sides once again and defected to the Yemen with 200 of his men and their armoured cars. The army held firm and by the end of the month Said was recaptured and the rebels driven out. The government's position now appeared stronger, having dealt with serious challenges from both extremes, but the President was unable to take advantage of the situation. Always unstable, his nerves deteriorated and for some months past he had conceived an obsession which blamed all the world's ills on President Johnson. The US Chargé d'Affaires, Eagleton, was more than once forced to listen to anti-American tirades from al Shaabi who formed the embarrassing habit of giving vent to his views in public.

The exiled Sultans kept up their pressure with uprisings in Baihan and the Radfan. Faced with increasing discontent in the army, the President decided to come to an accommodation with the defeated Left. Consequently, led by Abdul Fatah Ismail who had sought refuge in Bulgaria, the extremists and Marxists once more joined the government and determined to remove al Shaabi when the opportunity arose. As the President came under increasing pressure his behaviour became more extravagant. In April 1968 he was forced to relinquish the post of Prime Minister, and in June the Left sided with Muhammad Ali Haithem in a dispute over the command of the armed forces. Al Shaabi was forced to resign all his posts in June, and was for a time imprisoned in the house at Ras Marshag, once the mansion of the Director of Aden Airways. He spent his time in an empty room promulgating decrees and haranguing invisible audiences. Considered harmless, he was released and eventually died in 1979. His nephew Faisal al Shaabi was arrested and shot.

This coup has become known as the 'corrective move' by the Marxists and is given equal prominence in national celebrations with Revolution Day, 14 October, and Liberation Day, 27 November. The country now became the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen (PDRY).

Once in power the Left soon ousted the remaining moderates. Muhammad Ali Haithem was replaced as Prime Minister in December and a plane carrying Saif al Dhalai and others opposed to the Left exploded and crashed in mysterious circumstances during a tour of the Provinces. The new President was Salim Rubai Ali who had led the rebels in Ja'ar and he was supported by Abdul Fatah Ismail as Secretary General of the NLF. By the time the Fifth Congress met in March 1973 the country had been subjected to an orgy of Marxism. Government sponsored uprisings by tribesmen against landowners resulted in further land redistribution and the virtual collapse of commercial agriculture. In November 1969 all banks, insurance companies, trading houses and petrol distributors were nationalised. Private property was progressively outlawed so that by the time Abdul Fatah Ismail visited Moscow in 1979 he could boast that all forms of transport, including bicycles, had been appropriated by the people. The country became a police state. The yellow cars of the Secret Police, organised by the East Germans, became a symbol of terror. Those thought guilty of opposing the State were taken away, often to disappear. Conscription and compulsory political education were introduced for the youth of both sexes. To speak to foreigners was forbidden and a pass was required to travel from one town or province to another.

The purity of South Yemen's Marxist attitudes sometimes embarrassed both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, and in most international matters the PDRY stood far to the left of any other Arab government. On Palestine the PDRY opposed the UN Resolution of November 1967 which the Soviet Union had sponsored and criticised the petty bourgeois character of Egypt and Algeria, to which the Soviets had given favourable encouragement. The PDRY also criticised the Chinese for

their continued support of the Sudan after the liquidation of the Sudanese Communist Party in July 1971. They criticised both powers for their attempts at detente with the United States of America which was considered as the greatest threat to world peace.

These moves were not without opposition within the government. In particular the President sought reconciliation with Saudi Arabia. He agreed that in return for massive economic aid PDRY would cease attempts to export its revolution to Oman and the Gulf and give up assistance to a group of Yemeni Army officers who had fled south following the assassination of Ibrahim al Hamdi in October 1977. This policy was co-ordinated through the new North Yemeni President, Ahmad Husain al Ghashimi. Then the Left struck. Sometime on Friday 23 June 1978 President Salim telephoned his North Yemeni counterpart to say he was sending a special envoy to Sana. The envoy arrived and was shown into the North Yemeni President's office and they were both killed when a bomb exploded in the envoy's attache case.

In Aden the NLF militia led by Ali Antar attacked the President's house while Cuban flown jets strafed it from the air. The Regular Army attempted to support the President but they were unco-ordinated and defeated. That evening Aden Radio announced that the President had been tried and executed along with two of his Ministers. Abdul Fatah Ismail became Head of State, styling himself Chairman of the Presidential Council. Links with the Saudis who had already paid some $50 million out of a promised $200 million were immediately severed. The Soviet Union quadrupled its aid and sent crude oil for the refinery which the State had taken over from British Petroleum in May 1977.

In October 1978 Abdul Fatah Ismail signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with Soviet President Brezhnev foreseeing twenty years of military and general co-operation between the two states. This was a mark of great favour by the Soviet Union to its protégé. Twenty years is longer than the periods covered by similar treaties in Afghanistan and Ethiopia and reflects the importance the Soviet Union attaches to the strategic importance of PDRY. This was the summit of Abdul Fatah's achievement. The strain of ten years' Marxist rule had cooled revolutionary ardour and in April 1980 he was replaced by his Prime Minister Ali Nasser Muhammad. Unlike his predecessors Abdul Fatah was allowed to retire to Bulgaria.

Today there are signs that the PDRY is trying to mend its fences with Oman and Saudi Arabia. A limited amount of 'free enterprise' is being allowed and emigrants encouraged to return.

The departure of the British created a power vacuum. British aid which had been running at about £12 million pre-independence was cut to £6 million of which over £3 million was paid. After the dismissal of the Military Mission in 1968 Britain showed little concern for her former possession. Western interests were ably represented by the Americans but they received little encouragement from home, and in October 1969

diplomatic relations were severed altogether. Even if they had wished to, the NLF had nowhere to turn but the Eastern Bloc. The Soviet Union consolidated its position after 1968. In 1972 the strength of the Army and Militia was increased from 6,000 to 14,000 with Soviet aid and advisers. From then on the Soviet Fleet used Aden as its main base in the area and was granted communication facilities on the island of Socotra.

The apogee of their co-operation was in defence of the Marxist regime in Ethiopia, which was assailed by neighbouring Somalia and riven by internal rebellion. The Soviets launched a massive air bridge from Aden which ensured the Ethiopian regime's survival. South Yemeni troops are said to have actively supported the Ethiopians in the field but this has never been admitted. According to some, the Yemenis proved so unreliable that they had to be sent home—not for the first time.

As a matter of course the NLF support all radical groups, give them sanctuary and provide guerilla training. The infamous Carlos, members of the Baader-Meinhof, the Red Brigades, and especially extreme Palestinian groups, all passed through Aden. The NLF always maintained its links with George Habbash so it came as no surprise when after Beirut fell to the Israelis in 1982 the 1,000 commandos of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine found sanctuary in the PDRY.

Western influence has not disappeared altogether. The Japanese run a commercially very successful fishing concession alongside similar Russian and South Yemeni projects. By 1977 the income from fish had overtaken cotton and provided some 10% of the GNP. The Japanese provide aid, as do the Gulf States and the International Monetary Fund. Britain remains a leading trading partner.

The achievement of the NLF is considerable. They snatched power from the British when most of the pressure had in fact come from FLOSY and its sponsors. Furthermore they have held onto their power ever since. They have transformed a backward society and to an extent broken down tribal divisions. The cost has been heavy. The country is amongst the poorest in the world, most of the educated have fled, hundreds have died and untold numbers are still imprisoned; the dream of a Marxist Utopia is fading fast.

A word must be said about Yemeni unity. By history, origin and temperament, the Yemenis North and South deserve to become united in one nation. However, despite the rhetoric and occasional declarations by both governments proclaiming unity this is presently impossible if only because of the difference between the two societies. In the past the two have been under a single rule but rarely, and then it was always the stronger North which has been able to impose its hegemony.

The years after independence held many ironies. Of the three parties engaged—the NLF, the exiles, and the British—the future prospects of the NLF and the people they ruled were incomparably the worst. Many of the NLF leaders who had won power from the British were killed, imprisoned or exiled as the result of fratricidal strife. South Yemen became a land of fear and poverty. The regime admitted in 1982 that between independence

and 1978 over a million Yemenis, nearly half the total population, had left the country.*

The life of the former Rulers and their supporters, of the Adeni intellectuals, of FLOSY and the myriad factions which make up the Yemeni opposition in exile, is generally cosier.

Most of the Rulers are based in Saudi Arabia. Sultan Salih bin Hussain al Audhali still holds court in a Jedda villa. The Naib Jaabil leads a somewhat insubstantial Army of Liberation supported intermittently by the Saudi and North Yemeni governments at 20 riyals per head per month. The Sharif Hussain and his sons, lofty and disdainful to the end, live upon a mountain in Taif.† The Amir Ghalib of Mukalla has taken up history as a hobby. His brother Umar breeds horses and was married for some time to a girl from Yorkshire. Ahmad Abdullah al Fadhli, now divorced from the beautiful Karmila, is selling secondhand plant from Houston. His forays into business being more successful than His Highness of Lahej who left such matters to his wife with unfortunate results.

As a political force the Rulers count for little. When in power they would not be persuaded that to maintain it opportunity had to be open to all. Now in exile, relying on the crumbs of Saudi charity the disunity continues. Some, the Baihanis, the Audhalis and Aulaqis still have influence with their people, but this tends to be on a tribal rather than a national basis.

Those members of FLOSY still active in politics congregate in Cairo. By far the most successful is Abdullah al Asnag who was for several years Foreign Minister of North Yemen. Muhammad Salim Basindwah followed in his wake as a deputy minister. In 1980 Asnag was arrested and tried for high treason. His apparent crime was to write a pencilled note to a friend in which he described the President as insignificant (Ar. *tafif*). Sentenced to death, this was commuted to ten years' imprisonment after many representations by governments, including the British. He has since been released to house arrest in Sana. Basindwah continues as adviser on the affairs of the South but is out of favour. Abdul Qawi Mackawee is still politically active and lives in Cairo where he teamed up with Muhammad Ali Haithem the former NLF Prime Minister. 'Grenadier' Khalifa prospers and holds the prime job in Yemeni Airlines as their representative for the Gulf and the Far East. Yemeni Airlines employs many Adenis including Abdul Rahman Haideri as the Editor in Chief of its house magazine.

Husain Bayumi, Abdul Rahman Girgirah and Muhammad Hassan Ubali have all died in Jedda. Bayumi's wife, Adilla, married a Swede and now lives with her son in Taiz.

* MEED. 14.1.83.

† The Sharif Qaid, however, has been estranged from his family and is allowed to live in Aden lending credence to the story that he was a supporter of the NLF and helped engineer his family's downfall.

Generally Yemenis inside and outside South Arabia are mystified by British policy after 1964. How, they ask, could a Great Power expend much effort and vast treasure to build up a base and promptly abandon it; a country expert in the process of decolonising an empire leave a territory for which it had been responsible for over 100 years to a government it hardly knew and which was hostile to its interests?

In 1964 the Labour government of Harold Wilson inherited their predecessors' pro-Federal policy. Whilst in opposition members of the Party had given encouragement to the nationalists, especially the Aden Trades Union Congress. In truth the Party had paid scant attention to the details of the problem. For their part the nationalists had nobody who understood the nature of British politics. They had not mixed with British intellectuals and had not received higher education in Britain. The Labour Colonial Secretaries, Lord Longford and Anthony Greenwood, had expected to deal with a Nyerere or a Nkrumah, but instead were faced with Mackawee and al Asnag. What little chance they had of dealing was destroyed by timing; by the time the British were ready to talk Asnag was not in a position to deliver. His power in Aden, considerable on paper, had gone out of control and he was forced to try and win back support by adopting even more extreme positions. In the end George Brown, finding no socialists to talk to, was forced to go back to the policy of his Conservative predecessors. By that time it was too late.

These were the days before the realism of Northern Ireland and the explosion of oil prices. The Foreign Office, unnerved by memories of Suez and anxious to shed the image of Imperialism, sought to appease world opinion, especially in the Third World. They were embarrassed by South Arabia. The effect of these croakers was to tie the hands of the British forces and their Federal allies. Consequently after the advent of the Labour government no firm action was taken against insurgent bases across the border. The Federal government was given no opportunity to take matters into its own hands and were sometimes actively prevented from doing so. The rule of law was not upheld and legal means to prevent terrorism totally ineffective.

The British supporters of the Federal government also made their contribution to the tragedy. Officers attached to the various Rulers, to the Federal Army and the Police too often forgot whom they were supposed to be serving, the interests of Britain or even of the Federal government, and instead advanced the often conflicting interests of their princelings and organisations.

Even to the end it was almost heresy to suggest the Federal forces were engaged in acts of terrorism; whereas history and experience suggested this was the area where these problems usually began. An NLF cell was detected in the Armed Police in Crater as early as 1964 but no real attempt made to follow this up. The Aden Police were well known to be thoroughly corrupt but it never occurred to their British officers that the financial dealings of the men could have expanded into arms smuggling. Yet until

the British left, police vehicles passed through check points unsearched.

Those South Arabians who believed that the British government was obsessed by the minutiae of their troubles must have been disappointed by the published memoirs of the great men concerned, for judging by their reminiscences, South Arabia and its problems could have occurred on another planet.

Harold Wilson mentions giving lunch to 'the feudalist, almost pre-biblical rulers of the South Arabian Federation'.* More significantly he comments on the attitude of Duncan Sandys and the suggestion that his government had broken British pledges to South Arabia. 'We had one difficulty after another arising out of Mr Sandys's ministerial obsession with Federation: Rhodesia was a problem deriving from the failure of the Central African Federation, there had been the Malaysia break-up and now there was the problem met in dealing with Ministers of more than one country. "But Mr Sandys", they said, "had given us a pledge" that the British Government would do this or that. The trouble was there was no written record, note or minute, and we were more than once accused of bad faith over an alleged Government pledge whose existence we could neither confirm nor deny.'† This is misleading of the former Prime Minister. In the case of South Arabia he only had to refer to the relevant papers. The White Paper (Cmd 2414) issued after the 1964 Conference states, 'The South Arabian delegates asked that Britain should agree to independence for the Federation whilst continuing thereafter to assist in its defence. They requested that as soon as practicable the British Government should convene a conference for the purpose of fixing a date for independence not later than 1968, and of considering a Defence Agreement under which Britain would retain her military base in Aden for the defence of the Federation and the fulfilment of her worldwide responsibilities. The Secretary of State announced the agreement of the British Government to this request.' This agreement was made by a Conservative government according to several Federal Ministers and their British advisors.‡ Harold Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, met the delegates after the 1964 Conference and assured them that if Labour won in the coming election he would honour the agreement. No mention is made of this in his *The Labour Government 1964-1970. A Personal Record.*

George Brown, sometime Foreign Secretary, the man who promised to reveal all,§ had clearly thought better of it when the time came to write his memoirs. South Arabia gets an indirect mention through a tea party and a round of clock golf which he gave to the unfortunate UN Mission.¶

* *The Labour Government 1964-1970*, page 128.

† *The Labour Government 1964-1970*, page 232.

‡ Muhammad Farid, Saleh bin Hussain, Donald Foster, *Landscape with Arabs*, page 159.

§ *Sunday Times*, 10 April 1968.

¶ *In My Way*, page 158.

Richard Crossman's diaries, which give a candid insight into the workings of the Labour Cabinet, mention South Arabia but briefly. Lord Shackleton's appointment as resident Minister in Aden 'was a disaster as he was a key figure in our reform group.'* For the entry of Friday 27 October 'George Brown started a discussion on Aden by apologising for having to tell us that we'll be out in November instead of January. The rest of the Committee couldn't be more pleased. Really we've been miraculously lucky in Aden—cancelling all our obligations and getting out without a British soldier being killed *(sic)*. But George feels desperate because it's different from what he promised.'†

Of the last three High Commissioners, two have written their versions of events. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis chronicles in detail the tribulations of Federation until his replacement in 1964. Very different is Sir Humphrey Trevelyan who stood by as all that his predecessors had striven for crumbled away. Sir Humphrey was given a clear task to extract the British from South Arabia with as little cost as possible. This he achieved despite many difficulties. He was a man with a job to do. He may not have liked it, and it was a curious end to a distinguished public career. It was his duty and he did it. Outdated treaties and leaving behind a friendly government were very much secondary considerations.

Sir Kennedy Trevaskis went into business and after some adventures formed a partnership with Muhammad Farid and a Canadian oil company. He is now rumoured to be a millionaire. Sir Humphrey Trevelyan went back to the city, his directorships and to the House of Lords. Sir Richard Turnbull hasn't written a book. After South Arabia he was never asked to work again. The Socialists never forgave him for failing to achieve the impossible, the Conservatives for trying. For the supporters of Federation he was too liberal, and for those who believed that the answer lay in accommodation with the Nationalists too tough. He has retired and lives with quiet dignity in the Scottish borders.

The last Commander in Chief of Middle East Command, Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu was appointed Chief of Imperial General Staff but, tragically, ill health prevented him from taking up the post and he died shortly afterwards. General Tower achieved a lifetime's ambition and became Commandant of Sandhurst before retiring. Lt Colonel Colin Mitchell failed in his campaign to preserve the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders‡ as a separate entity, left the army, became a journalist, a Conservative Member of Parliament, and now heads a management agency in London. Colonel Richard Lawson, a staff officer with the Federal Army

* *Crossman Diaries*, Tuesday 11 April, page 341.

† *Crossman Diaries*, 27 October 1967, page 389.

‡ There was perhaps a darker side to the activities of the Argylls. In January 1981 three soldiers from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were given life sentences for the killing of two farmers during their service in Ulster. The convictions were obtained following disclosures by a fellow soldier who was concerned that one of the men involved may have been the Yorkshire

(cont. on p. 226)

during the last days, leads the list of South Arabian veterans who have succeeded. He is now Lt General Sir Richard Lawson, KCB DSO OBE, Nato commander for North West Europe. Colonel George Coles still travels the Middle East, now as an editor for an Arab trade magazine. Major Peter Bartlett is export director for a company specialising in security aids. Fusilier Storey left the army shortly after his adventures for a tough career as a diver. When not working abroad he lives in Hull with his wife and family.

Bill Heber Percy married King Hussain's secretary and worked for a time as Development Secretary with the Sultans of Oman. He now farms on the Welsh borders. Tony Ashworth is another who has gone on to greater things. British information chief in Hong Kong at the time of Vietnam he is now personal adviser on information affairs to the Sultan of Oman and divides his time between Muscat and Hong Kong.

Only in Palestine did the British leave a territory in such confusion. It is too early to evaluate what harm, if any, was done to British and Western interests by so abrupt a withdrawal. In any case the time had come for the British to go and it would have been unwise to linger for long.

If the Federal government could have survived for a few more months with the Egyptian withdrawal from North Yemen, it may have been possible to establish a moderate pro-Western State. This would certainly have been more benign than the para-Marxist regime which eventually gained power. The biggest losers were the South Arabian people.

Ripper. His name has not been publicly revealed. During the investigation the informant also gave details to the Army Special Investigation Branch of alleged atrocities committed in Crater. As far as can be ascertained no action was taken.

In the weeks following the trial the soldier, now discharged, approached the Glasgow *Sunday Mail* who conducted a careful and comprehensive investigation. Scores of former soldiers were interviewed and many maintained that no impropriety took place. Eventually a dozen men signed sworn statements detailing robbery and murder by officers and men. One soldier admitted personally shooting down five unarmed Arabs in different incidents. Several alleged murder of men by morphine injections and shooting. Others claimed to be the distressed witnesses to the brutal killing of a teenager found in a café after curfew and bayonetted to death on the orders of an officer. Road block duty, they claimed, was the opportunity for wholesale theft. All this and more was published by the *Sunday Mail* in their editions of 26 April and 10 May 1981. In the days following publication the newspaper kept two telephone lines open for reaction from the public. A lot of calls were abusive but a significant number were from former soldiers supporting the allegations, including some of those who had formerly denied them.

The dossier was sent to George Younger, then Secretary of State for Scotland and himself a former Argyll. He passed it to the legal authorities for investigation. Then, after an interval of 22 months the Crown Agent wrote to the Editor of the *Sunday Mail* on behalf of the Lord Advocate: 'A full report has been submitted to the Lord Advocate who has decided that no proceedings should be instituted. This investigation has taken a long time but as you will appreciate there was difficulty in tracing some of the officers and men who were serving in 1967 and who had since left the Army. The Lord Advocate instructed me to thank the *Sunday Mail* for bringing the matter to his attention.' (*Sunday Mail*, 27 March 1983). The passage of time and the legal complications involved in prosecuting offences committed long ago in a foreign land were also taken into consideration.

Throughout the allegations there was no suggestion that the Commanding Officer, Lt Colonel Colin Mitchell, knew of, or was involved in, any of the alleged atrocities and he steadfastly refused to comment in public on the claims.

The Argylls themselves asked for an enquiry. At the Regimental Headquarters in Stirling Castle the battle honours and combat mementoes covering a long and proud history are displayed; reference to Aden is much muted.

Were the British fortunate to get out with so little loss as Richard Crossman suggests or did the withdrawal have a domino effect causing British evacuation of the Gulf and the subsequent explosion in the oil price? Does it matter that the Soviets are firmly entrenched on the Western approaches to the Indian Ocean? They were equally well established in Egypt but left. Only time will tell.

Time is rapidly eradicating the memories of the British presence. Outside Aden the country was hardly touched. On the road through Radfan the battalion signs remain cut into the rock but they are fading fast, and the people remember with surprising affection the old times. Britons are still welcome and a team organised by the Crown Agents is repairing the old road to the Yemen.

In Aden the signs are more prominent, the port, the Prince of Wales Pier, as it is still known, barracks and churches, and the old fortifications persist. Yet the most permanent legacy is the widespread use of English and the education of many of the Adenis who spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, particularly to North Yemen where they now provide the infra-structure in government and commerce which is slowly bringing that country into the modern world.

Postscript

In the winter of 1982 a traveller flew into Aden and discovered on arrival that his baggage had been lost. Taking the limited compensation offered, he set off to purchase some clothing. In all of Aden's markets, once the most flourishing west of Singapore, nothing was to be found. Eventually he found himself in a State Emporium where the only possibly suitable goods on offer were a heap of serge suits, all the same size and cut, produced for a figure both squat and portly by an unnamed factory of the Eastern Bloc.

On learning the nationality of his customer the assistant picked up a pair of trousers as if for display, glanced around to make sure he wasn't overheard and whispered behind the makeshift screen, 'It was so much more comfortable when the British were here.'

Appendix
South Arabian Political Organisations

Free Yemenis *Date formed: 1945*

Plotted to reform North Yemen and behind the attempted coup of 1948. The leaders were captured and executed but many of the survivors later played leading roles in Yemeni and South Arabian politics. They used Aden as a base.

Leaders: Ibrahim Hamid al Din, Abdullah al Wazir, Muhammad Ahmad Noman, Muhammad Ali Luqman.

Muslim Association *Date formed: 1946*

Aden's first political party. Founded by a Pakistan lawyer; later merged with the Aden Association.

Leaders: Pan Islamic

Aden Association *Date formed: 1949*

Aim: constitutional advance within the Commonwealth. Split and dissolved in 1957 over the issue of qat.

Leaders: Muhammad Ali Luqman, Hasan Bayumi, Muhammad Hasan Obali

South Arabian League (SAL) *Date formed: 1951*

Aims: unity of South Arabia and the exclusion of foreign influence. Did not support Yemeni unity, supported by Egypt and later Saudi Arabia. Briefly joined OLOS. Overwhelmed by FLOSY and NLF in the period before independence. Still in existence in exile.

Leaders: Sultan Ali Abdul Karim of Lahej, the Jifri brothers, Shaikhan al Habshi.

Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) *Date formed: 1954, Palestine*

The Pan Arab Society of George Habbash from which the leaders of the NLF drew inspiration.

United National Front (UNF) *Date formed: 1954*

Aims: unity of the Yemens and all Arabia, and expulsion of foreign influence combined with radical reform. Broke up in 1957.

Leaders: Shaikhan al Habshi (later with SAL), Aidrus al Hamid, Abdullah al Jifri (later with SAL), Abdullah al Asnag (later ATUC and FLOSY), Abdullah Badhib, founder of the Yemeni Communist Party, in 1983 a leading figure in the government of PDRY.

Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) *Date formed: 1956*

The organisation of labour, later the mouthpiece of radical nationalism. Initially encouraged by the British TUC, it was later supported by Egypt, the Yemen and many radical countries. Split up between NLF and FLOSY unions. Ceased to exist after independence.

Leaders: Abdullah al Asnag, Ali Husain Qadhi, the brothers Aswadi.

United National Party (UNP) *Date formed: 1957*

The PLO Federal Aden Party. The Federal government as such never had a political party. This was a basic reason for its failure. Despite pressure from the British, the Rulers could never commit themselves to such a radical conception.

Leaders: Hasan Bayumi, Husain Bayumi, Abdul Rahman Girgirah.

People's Congress *Date formed: 1958*

Aim: independence for Aden. Faded on the approach of violence.

Leader: Muhammad Ali Luqman.

Shaikhs of the South *Date formed: 1960*

Anti-Federal grouping formed by the Imam Ahmad out of dissidents living in the Yemen. Dissolved in 1962.

Leaders: Amir Haidera, Muhammad Aidrus, Qahtan al Shaabi.

People's Socialist Party (PSP) *Date formed: 1962*

Political arm of the ATUC. Broke up in 1963.

Leaders: Abdullah al Asnag, Said Hasan Sohbi, Badya Isanallah, Fuad Barahim, Ashraf Khan.

Free Officers of the South *Date formed: 1963*

Anti-ATUC/PSP nationalists who provided a forum for adherents of the Arab Nationalist Movement and later the Aden wing of the NLF.

Leader: Abdul Malik Ismail.

National Liberation Front (NLF) *Date formed: 1963*

Formed by Egypt as a force to combat British and Federal interest. Quickly broke away and turned to the far Left for the solution of social, political and economic problems. Drew inspiration from several sources including Nasser, the ANM, the Baath and Communist Parties. Victors in the Civil War, snatched power from the British. The ruling party of South Yemen.

Leaders: Qahtan al Shaabi, Abdul Malik Ismail, Muhammad Ali Haithem, Abdul Fatah Ismail, Ali Abdulla Maiseri, Ali Salim Rubaya.

Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS) *Date formed: 1965*

A shortlived combination of dissidents put together by al Asnag at the behest of the Egyptians. Later merged with FLOSY.

Leaders: Abdullah al Asnag, Muhammad Aidrus, Ahmad bin Abdullah al Fadhli, Jaabil bin Hussain.

Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) *Date formed: 1966*

Formed after the failure of OLOS and in attempt to gain co-operation between various factions including the NLF. At sometime included all the major opponents of Britain and the Federation. Losers of the Civil War between the factions members did most to put political pressure upon the British and bring about the failure of the Federal policy. After the disappearance of the Federal government many Rulers and their supporters joined FLOSY.

Leaders: Abdullah al Asnag, Muhammad Salim Basindwah, Abdul Qawi Mackawee and many others.

